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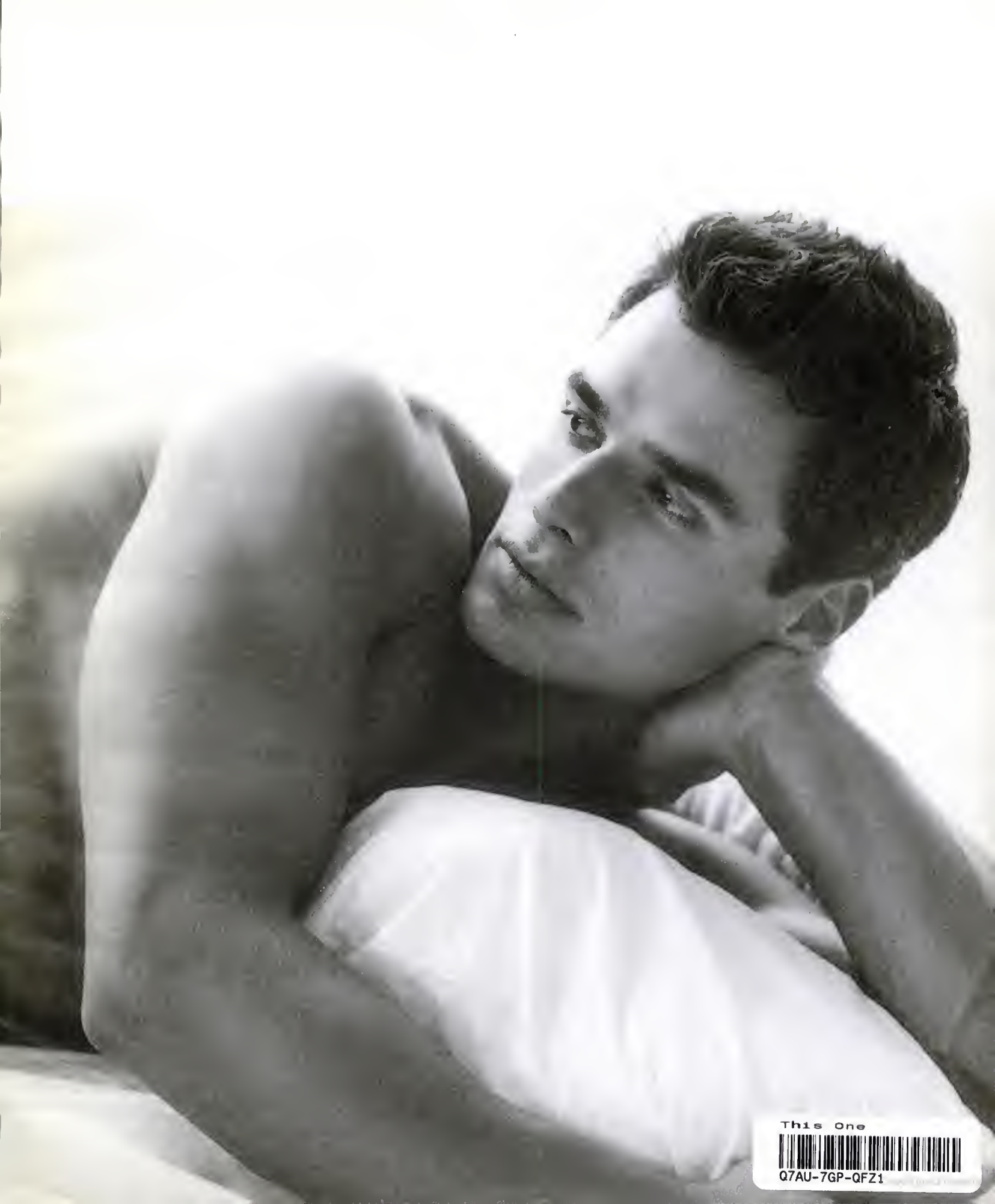

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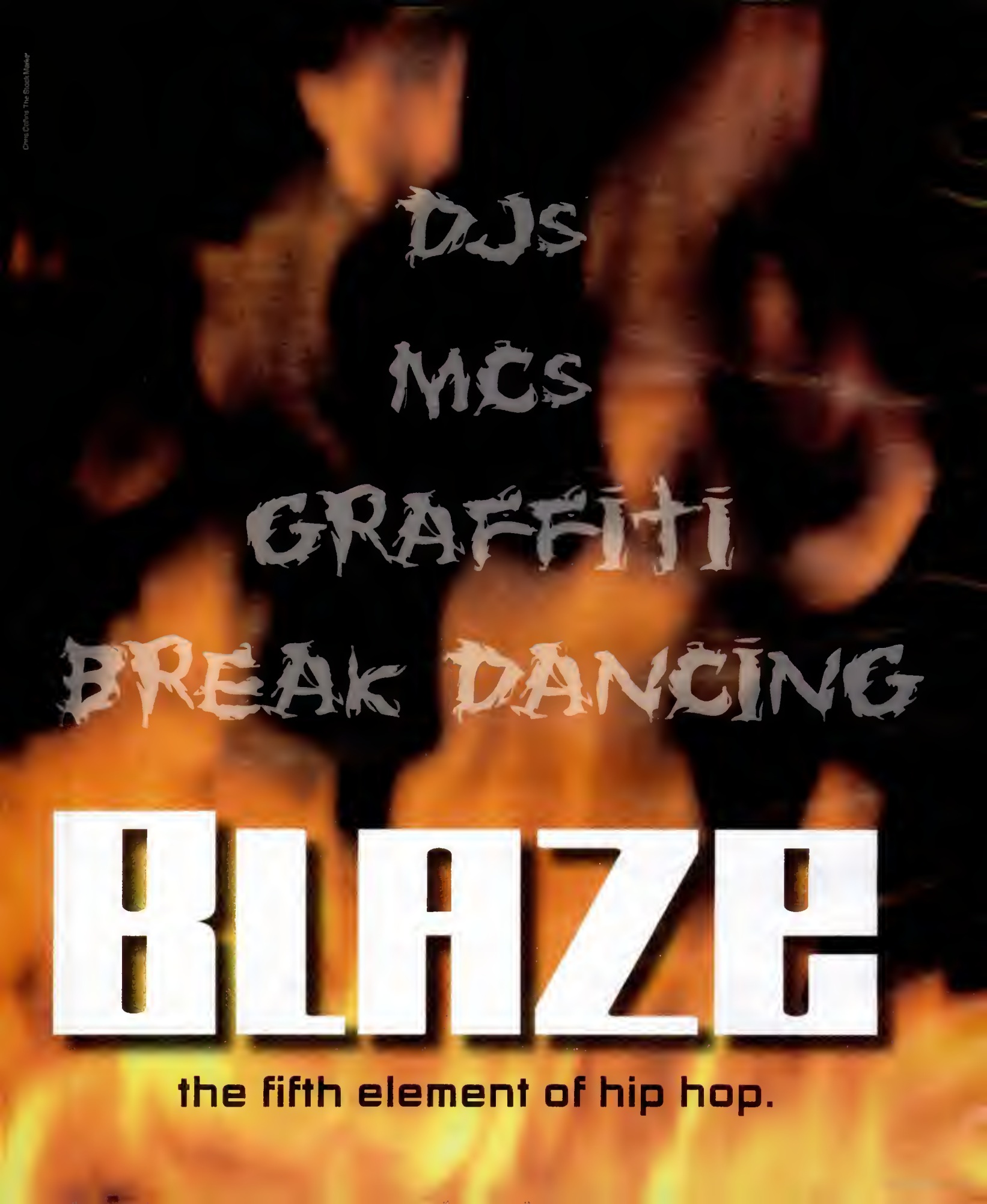
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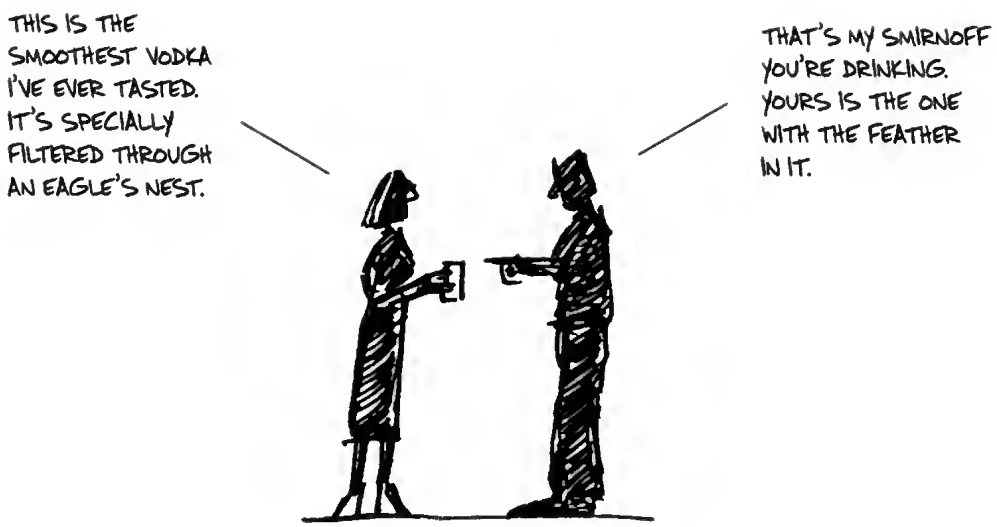
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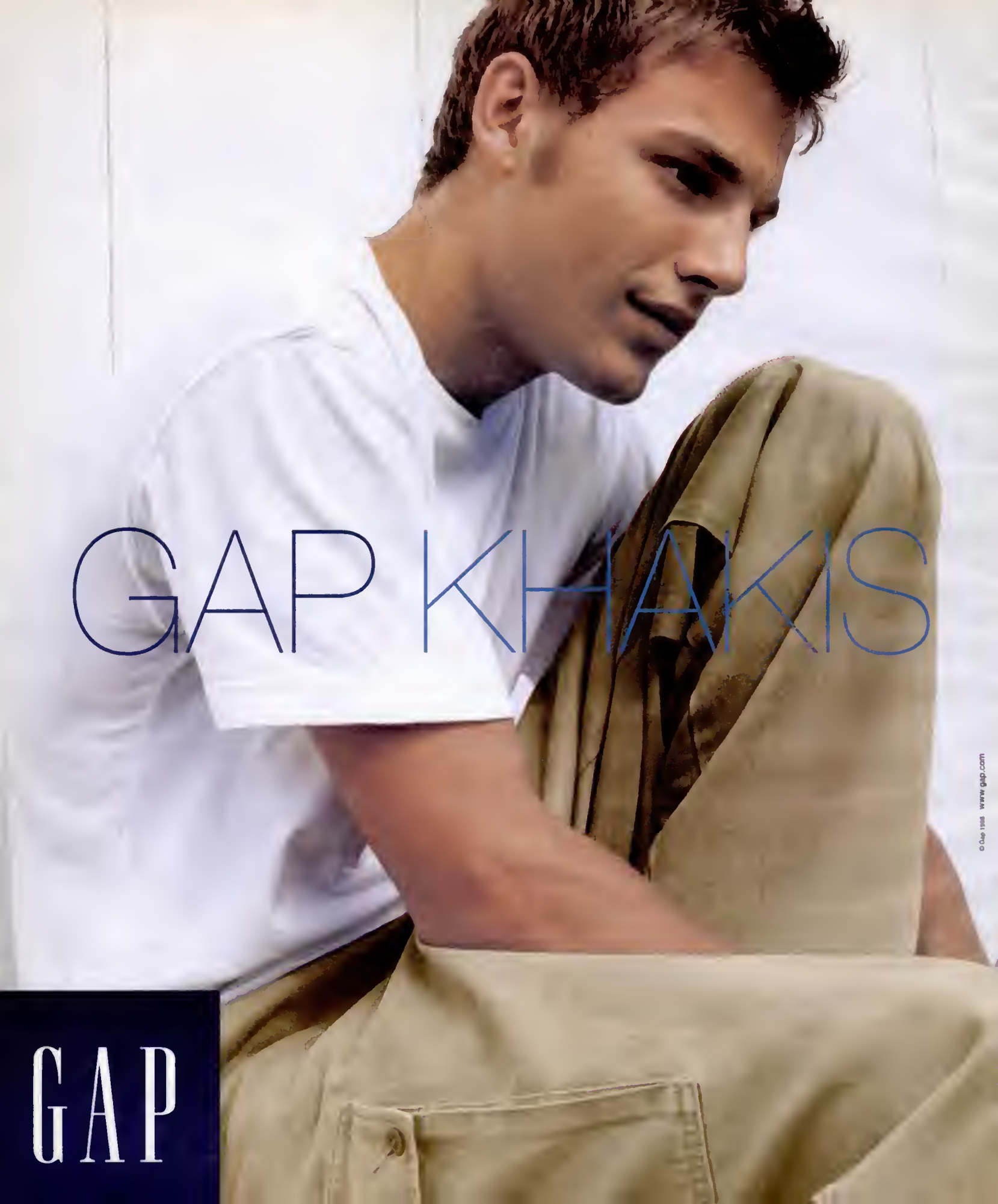

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Theo Fleury. February 25, 1998. 12:15 p.m.



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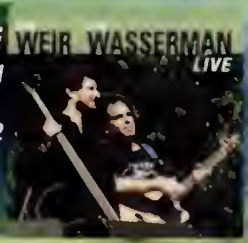
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contributors

"He did let me finger his hole—so to speak," says writer Susen Perry of e British seeker who underwent trepenetion—the bizarre practice of boring an opening into the skull to attain e state of enlightenment ("A Hole in the Head"). "It wes pretty remarkable," she recalls. "I could get two fingers underneath the skull bone end hold onto it like a bowling ball." The unflappeble Perry writes for *Playboy* and the *San Francisco Bay Guardian*, and her fiction appeers in the *North Atlantic Review*.



"I wrote a piece on Prodigy for the *New York Times* et the end of 1992," seys *Spin* Senior Editor Simon Reynolds, who weighs in agein on the angst-ridden techno outfit for the "*Spin* Top 40." "I ended the eerlier piece by seying that it sounded to me like the new rock'n'roll," Reynolds recalls. "It may seem strangely clairvoyant now, but et the time, I never actually believed it would ever really happen." Reynolds is the author of the forthcoming *Generation Ecstasy: Into the World of Techno and Rave Culture* (Little, Brown).



Contrary to what you might expect, Radiohead's unconventionel-looking frontman Thom Yorke is ectuelly the perfect photo subject—at least according to *Spin* Contributing Photogrepher Christian Witkin. "The guy's fantastic-looking, he's very photogenic," says Witkin, who shot Yorke in London for this month's cover. "You just stand beck end let him go—you just heve to make sure he's in the picture." Witkin also shoots for *Details* and *Detour*, and photogrephed Nike's latest ad campeign.



Writer Will Hermes and DJ Shedow ere both obsessive record collectors who just moved to Northern Californie's Marin County. When Hermes interviewed Shedow for the "*Spin* Top 40," the pioneering DJ offered some practical edvice to his new neighbor. "Shadow recommended using modular boxes for storing and moving records," says Hermes, whose own record collection numbers in the five figures, "because that way you can steck them end use them for furniture." Hermes writes for the *Village Voice*, *GQ*, end the Minneapolis *City Pages*.



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If the biggest sin in the Church of Satan is stupidity, then Marilyn Manson may find himself excommunicated very soon. —Robert T. Baker



The Life of Brian

Marilyn Manson's writing proves he is actually an intelligent, honest person who deserves to be heard ["Running With the Devil," cover, February]. Hopefully, his message will inspire other people to eradicate denial and indulge in self-awareness. Thanks for injecting some depth into mass media.

Erin L. Cummings
Preble, New York

Thanks so much for the lovely cover photo of Courtney Love. It's good to see she has finally reverted back to her true self.

Judy Underwood
Ft. Worth, Texas

I commend you for your articles about Marilyn Manson and Anton LaVey. For once, a magazine lets readers draw their own conclusions instead of spoon-feeding them bigoted lies. I appreciate your boldness.

Rev. Christo Brohawn
Baltimore, Maryland

Although I appreciate Marilyn Manson's desire to have his side of the story heard, I find it difficult to accept the hypocrisy of a man who announces "We will no longer be oppressed by the fascism of beauty" and then proceeds to seek out and be seen with the most beautiful people he can find. If he had kept his mouth shut a bit longer, he could have perpetuated more of what he really seeks: mystery, intellectual respect, and power.

Heather Blake
Reseda, California

I'm not a fan of Marilyn Manson, but I do understand him and what he represents. We're told that freedom of speech means the right to speak out against people who don't have the same views as us, but once someone is offended, it's all over and a mess of legal bullshit arises. In a perfect society there wouldn't be a need for Manson because someone like him wouldn't be construed as an outcast, but as someone whose ideas—while extreme—are still valid.

Matt DeMello
Norwalk, California

There's nothing more entertaining than a bullshit intellectual's descent into lame celebrity porn. If Manson's musical career ever sputters, he can always fall back on writing Bret Easton Ellis novels.

Daniel Morris
Los Angeles, California

I was totally outraged to see Marilyn Manson photographed with a bunch of little kids! Worse yet, they were dressed like him. In no way is Manson a role model for anyone, especially young children. What parent in their right mind would allow that picture to be taken?

Emily Taylor
Melone, New York

If the biggest sin in the Church of Satan is stupidity, then Marilyn Manson may find himself excommunicated very soon.

Robert T. Baker
Playa del Rey, California

Hang the DJs

Keith Moerer's "Who Killed Rock Radio" investigation [February] should be mandatory reading for the nation's radio programmers. Maybe it would help them realize how much the stations they work for suck. There's plenty of good music out there, and I should know—I work for a college station. Support your local college radio and forget the commercial junk.

Anson Pope
Mahwah, New Jersey

Heavy rotation keeps you spinning from one station to the next. Don't programmers realize that the lines are so blurred between channels that even the listeners who *can* tolerate repetition have no station loyalty?

Aaron Schnittmen
Rochester, New York

Although I found it disheartening, I welcomed your piece on Modern Rock radio. On a recent car trip, a friend and I immediately commiserated over the absolute absence of fresh, decent music on our local station. Once again, Ani DiFranco went back into my tape deck. God forbid some DJ actually plays two female artists in a row.

Jess Duda
Washington, D.C.

Your article on Modern Rock radio really hit home for me. I was once a DJ on a college radio station and enjoyed the freedom to play really new bands. When I was later hired

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The Sound-Off: The second AOL Online Music Awards were presented and subverted by yours truly, SPINonline. Thanks to the more than 700,000 of you who visited the site. Check out SPINonline's Heavy Rotation section for the full list of OMA results.

Just Shoot Me: For Dreamiest Member of Hanson, you, of course, chose the milquetoast trio's doppelgänger, David Spade. Don't worry, *Teen Beaters*, the hunky "Tay" came in second, closely followed by Beck Hansen.

Hell Is for Children: Best Album for Torturing Your Parents and Artist Most Likely to Be Damned to Hell netted two OMA awards for family-values poster boy Marilyn Manson. Parentally Disrespectful AOLers can expect to spend eternity roasting alongside Mr. Anti-christ Superstar himself.

Good Will Spanking: We still can't believe you chose Mariah Carey over the brattier and far more deserving Liam Gallagher, Jimmy Pop Ali, or Fiona Apple for the Artist Most in Need of a Good Spanking Award. Obviously, the depravity of your cyber-fantasies knows no bounds.

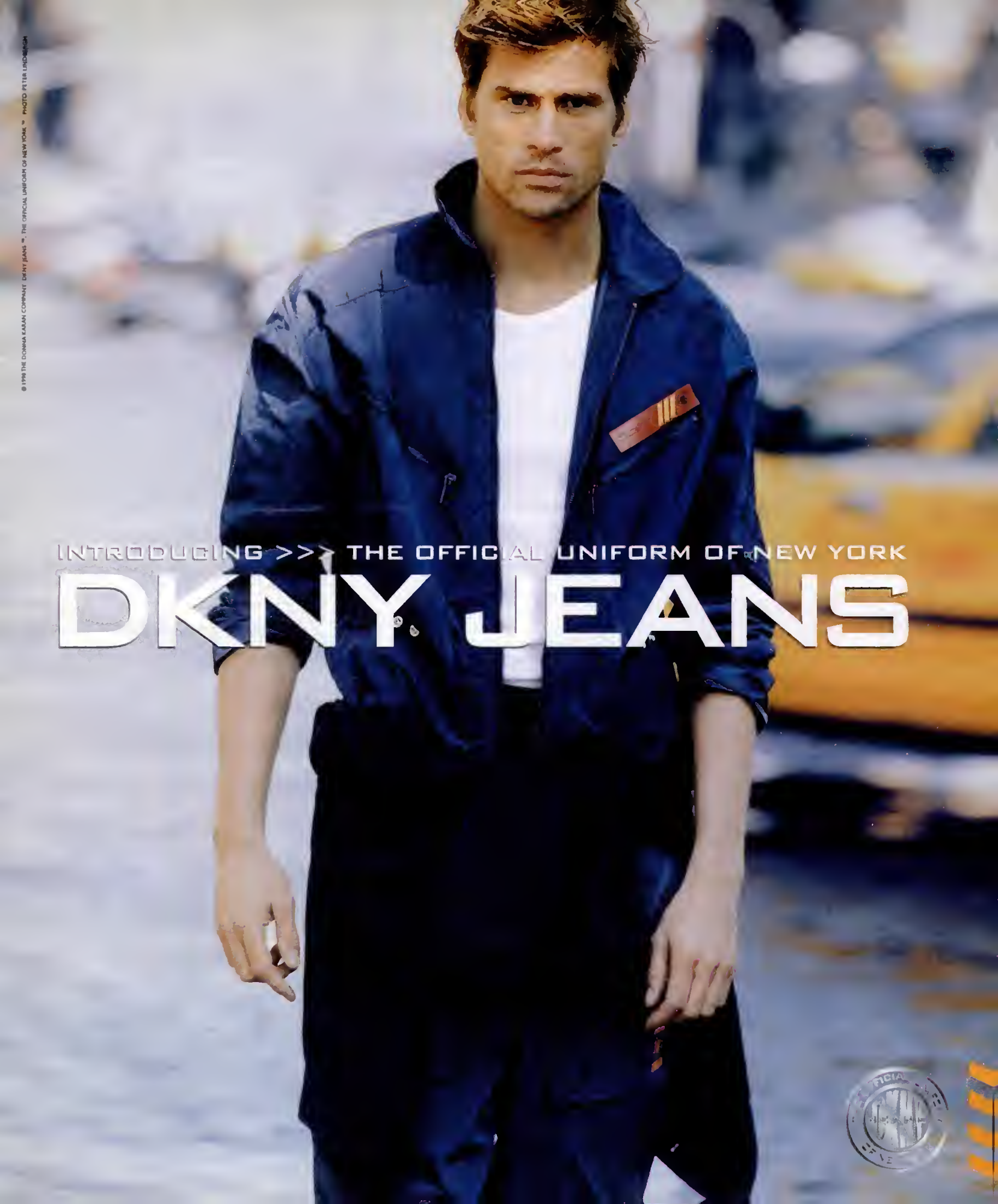
It's a Barbie World: The Grunge Courtney (with realistic running mascara) won the favorite Choice for a Courtney Love Barbie™ Doll, trouncing the fashionable Hollywood Courtney and our personal favorite, Malibu Courtney, with optional Ed Norton doll riding shotgun in her pink Corvette. Guys, she's *evolving*.

SPINdex: We're willing to bet you've got some pretty vocal responses to our 40 Most Vital Artists list. E-mail the names of the artists we most vitally missed to SPINtronic@aol.com.



Middle of nowhere: *David Spade.*

ABOVE: DAVID LACHAPELLE


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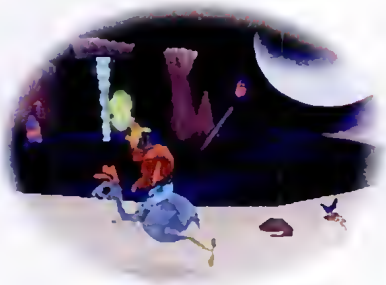


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Pretty Hate Machine: the angry twentysomething

I am ashamed to admit this, but I applaud you for your Marilyn Manson autobiography excerpt ["Runnin' With the Devil," February]—for the single reason that none of your staffers wrote it!! I find strange solace in the fact that the most trivial, prepeckaged, and empty writing since the Debbie Gibson memoir comes straight outta a man-child whose legacy will linger as long as Crystal Pepsi and OK Soda. Whoops, seems little Mr. Hemingway had some ghostwriting "help" from one Neil Strauss, who got his own official HACK tattoo when he declared his butt buddy the most interesting artist in the history of music in a *Rolling Stone* cover story (your fuckin' competitors—what up wit' dat?) last year. But you crafty *Spin* devils got to have your flake and eat it, too—that is, sell out on the stands without sullying your Pontius Pilate hands with any explicit endorsements of the Antichrist Superstore.

As for Manson, I've had my fill of borrowed mantras about "worshipping yourself" and being "responsible for your own good and evil." Doesn't that pretty much reduce his Darwinian code of morals to freakin' 12-step therapy? Step 1: Admit you have a problem. Step 2: Milk it. Steps 3–12: Piss off your 'rents. And if someone who's pushing 30 still needs an Anton LaVey figure to stand in as a high-school guidance counselor, he's even more pathetic than I thought. "I'm not and have never been a spokesperson for Satanism"—nice line, Brian Warner from Ohio, but you certainly cranked the Beelzebub shtick up to 11. What's your next endorsement—an "Always Coca-Cola" nipple ring?

Hate,

Tony Stockton
Roanoke, Virginia

by a commercial station, I knew I would have much less input, but I was still amazed at how much power record labels and advertisers wield. Kids aren't stupid, though—they can tell when some jock doesn't care anymore and they *will* hit the play button on their CD player instead.

Treci Alton
San Antonio, Texas

Having lived in the land of college radio for the last three years, I'd forgotten how much commercial radio, on the whole, sucks. But there is a large demographic of people who would have to build a 30-foot aerial just to hear a college station. Is it that hard to realize that if a station started playing more innovative music, it might win back those of us who'd rather suffer through books on tape than listen to the crap on the car radio? If some programmers actually tried diversity, they might see that it actually *boosts* ratings.

Erik Klemetti
Williamstown, Massachusetts

Coming from Keith Moerer's hometown of Minneapolis, I, too, was saddened by Disney's swallowing of REV 105. Now my choices are limited to alternapop acts such as Sugar Ray, stale hard rock, or teenyboppar cheese. I truly hope some stations wise up soon, because I have not listened to the radio for over six months, and surely many others are following suit.

Jef Stout
Anoka, Minnesota

The Short Good-bye

I beg Sean Landers to reconsider his resignation [Genius Lessons, February]. And to anyone who has ever written Sean hate mail, I hope you lie in bed each and every night, wide-eyed and riddled with guilt, knowing that it is because of *you* we have lost Sean's insight into this circus we call life.

Sally Olson
Mt. Pleasant, Michigan

Never in my short life have I so thoroughly enjoyed reading the bitchings of another human being more than I enjoyed Sean Landers's. I'm ringing a bell for you, Sean—I hope you find your wings. And I apologize for taking a great thing for granted.

Nicholas A. Kovech
Cleveland, Ohio

I have a simple question for Sean Landers: If you had a loyal fan—like me, for example—who has read every piece of your writing in *Spin*, just how do you expect me to feel about you now? I was extremely insulted to be categorized into a group of so-called retards whom you obviously do not care for.

Milena Spalding
Marshall, Virginia

Editor's note: Sean Landers was joking, sucker (see Genius Lessons, page 148). But it brings him much joy to imagine his readers plagued with guilt, self-loathing, and insomnia.

A Star Is Mourned

Why did the passing of INXS frontman Michael Hutchence merit a mere four paragraphs [Soundbites, February]? Although we INXSaries may sometimes long for the days when Hutchence graced two covers of *Spin* in just two years, such an influential and charismatic performer deserved better.

Karen Gerard
Duluth, Minnesota

Thank you for one of the most beautiful pictures of Michael Hutchence I have ever seen. He was a consummate musician and performer, and an awesome soul.

Gretchen Stanley
Abingdon, Maryland

An obituary should look back at someone's life, not the ugly rumors surrounding his death. You've succeeded only in defacing the image of a great rock star.

Amanda Fleischman
Los Altos, California

Blond Ambition

I enjoyed Zev Borow's look at independent film stars ["The Spindie 50," February], but there was someone missing: Michael Madsen! Of the *Reservoir Dogs* crew, you included Mr. Brown (Quentin Tarantino), Mr. Pink (Steve Buscemi), and even Mr. Orange (Tim Roth)—but no Mr. Blond. With only a few exceptions, most of Madsen's large body of work is in indie film. I wouldn't lose any sleep by bumping Ed Burns to give Madsen his hard-earned spot.

Matt Fitzgerald
Worcester, Massachusetts

The Kid Is All Right

I have a distinct feeling that had Radish's *Restraining Bolt* gone Platinum, you'd be writing about what a genius Ben Kweller is [Assembly Line, February]. Like any teenager, he needs the space to experiment—and maybe even make mistakes. In the meantime, let him out from under your microscope.

Jeffrey Liles
Dallas, Texas

It's sad that since a little happy bands without Satanic themes and Parental Advisory stickers are mocked. I am proud to be one of the 12,000 people who own *Restraining Bolt*. Rock on, Radish!

Tamsan Turner
Marshfield, Vermont

Age Against the Machine

Am I supposed to be hanging with the boomers yuppying it up or down in the pit moshing it up? I cite Steve Erickson's pretentious, pseudo-intellectual, and poorly argued film column ["Jon Bon Jovi, Renaissance Man," February] on "Why bad musicians make good movie actors, and vice versa." Please leave the geezer Hollywood worship to the E! channel—they do more than fill the void.

Tanye Radovich
Queens, New York

The Poison Apple

Dear Tony "Migraine Boy" Stockton [Going Postal, February]: I'm turning 20 soon, too. I have a navel ring as well as a tongue piercing and soon, hopefully, one in my eyebrow. I'm not trying to act "freaky" to get attention. I do it for my own interest and taste. Stop crying over other people's lives and start worrying about your own. At least Fiona Apple focuses on herself.

Angie Jones
Albany, Oregon

Tony Stockton's letter about Fiona Apple was downright cruel. I do not think rape is a light issue to be mocked. Instead of insulting her for telling the "same exact" stories, I would command her for being able to deal with it at such a young age.

Erin L. McFarland
Middletown, Rhode Island

Write Going Postal, 6 West 18th Street, New York, NY 10011, or e-mail spinonline@aol.com. Always include your full name and phone number for verification. Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

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Christin Wooldridge has a more fun way to get her heart rate up. She cranks up her stereo and zips down the highway in her Mirage Coupe LS. A 113-horsepower* cardiovascular wonder machine. Too bad aerobics isn't this much fun.



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Drama King

Crooner Rufus Wainwright wants to fill the world with silly love songs. What's wrong with that?

Some guys power-slam protein coladas before they hit the stege. Crooner Rufus Weinwright blests opera—meybe "Liebestod" from *Tristan und Isolde*—and feels the energy rise. "If they can do *this*," he tells himself, "I can go out there and sing my piddling songs." Wainwright goes in for swoonery and big-scale drama. His self-titled debut beams e confused-but-fearless feith in eternal love, and suggests a clutch of piano-playing songwriting sources—he sounds like a '90s Stephen Foster one moment, a queer Herry Nilsson the next. "I love being gay," says the Montreal native, "but the music is terrible." He disses disco, end considers himself one Canadian who won't be teaming up with Barbra Streisand anytime soon. "I never related to gay people," he says. "I always had e better time with the barflies or sexy, upset teenagers who didn't know *what* sex they were."

The son of folkies Kate McGerrigle and Loudon Wainwright III, the younger Wainwright was raised in a "let's put on a show" home (Dad's "Rufus Is a Tit Man" wes a big hit eround the house). After his father bailed on the family, Wainwright went on tour with Mom's group, the McGarrigle Sisters, singing "My Old Kentucky Home" before he was old enough to shave. Weinwright sings about his mom on "Beauty Mark," and his sister Martha also pens songs about the dysfunctional folksters. Who needs family counseling when you've got a record contract? "We should put ell the songs in one room," says Wainwright, "and everybody could leave end let the songs talk to each other."

RJ Smith



Shiny, happy person: *Rufus Wainwright.*

JAMES SMOLKA

Copyrig



Road rage: from left, Issac Brock, Eric Judy, and Jeremiah Green.

Mighty Mouse

Modest Mouse: the working man's indie rock

Name: Modest Mouse
Sound: Shimmering indie rock, with a whiff of long-heul trucker butt-sweat.
Album: *The Lonesome Crowded West*, the band's second full-length, is a startling chronicle of down-and-out types (from "Cowboy Dan" to "the man with teeth like God's shoe shine") who spend 74 minutes road-tripping with e six-pack under tha seet end trouble on their minds.
Personnal: Isaac Brock, 22, vocals/guitar; Eric Judy, 23, bass; Jermemiah Green, 20, drums
Hometown: Issaquah, Washington, although Brock recently moved to Seettle—for now. "You can't live in a shed outside your parents' trailer forever," he says.
Saxual rite of passaga: "After I dropped out of high school," says Brock, "I lived in New York City for a few months in e one-bedroom epartment with my girlfriend and her super-Italian dad. But my sex life sucked then, anyway. It turned out she wes a lesbien and I was a premeture ejeculator. So it reelly wesn't a problem for us. Maybe for her dad it was."
Popular myth: That the trio is young enough to qualify as the indie rock Henson. "I've been reeding thet I'm a teeneger since whenever they started writing articles about us," complains Brock. "And I wasn't even a teenager then. It's not something you feel rad ebout."
What's with tha name: "I read some book that referred to working-class people es modest, mouse-like people.
Was it *Of Mice and Men*? "Maybe. I don't think I've read thet, but I bet it's pretty good." **Ethan Smith**

Found Sounds

Way mundane exotica for sound boys

Planet Pimp Records in San Francisco hes launched e series of singles thet takes the newfound fescinetion with exotic sounds to its logicel, if sometimes preposterous, extreme. The initiel releases, *Sounds of the American Fest Food Resteurents, Vol. 1* and *Sounds of the San Francisco Adult Bookstores*, are a collection of bite-size "authentic field recordings" culled from the KFCs and peep-show emporiums of the Bay Area. Peppered with cheeky, pseudo-academic voice-overs ("Are you looking for tokens? Indeed..." purrs the vaguely British nerretor of *Adult Book Stores*), the discs capture the sonic exotica of everyday urban buzz—muffled cash transactions, construction noises, moans from a buddy booth—and bring it to a turntable near you.

So far, the *Sounds* collection has found an audience with discriminating obscurants, and *Fast Food Restaurants* is particularly popular in Jepen, which, says Plenet Pimp founder Sven-Erik Geddes, "boggles my mind." With eight more titles in the works, renging from *Airport Restrooms* to *Hewaiian Car Rental Agencies*, Geddes thinks the series hes mejor erchival potentiel. "Right now, this might be taken only es e joke," he speculetes, "but in 50 yeers, people might say, 'Hey, listen to this—this is the ectuel inside of an adult bookstore!'" **Tim Kenneally**



GALLAGHER FRANK MICELOTTA/OUTLINE; MICHAELS AND LEE: GREG DE GUIRE/LONDON FEATURES.

COVERAGE

Id, Ego, Superego

→ **While it may seem at** times as if we live in a world comprised solely of egomaniacs, exhibitionists, and self-promoters, the Bureau of Labor Statistics is here to tell us otherwise. According to the Bureau's latest estimates, tha U.S. workforce now includes 148,000 public relations specialists, which works out to just one PR person for avery 1,790 Americans.
→ **Perhaps that low** PR person–per-capita ratio is due to tha fact that today's calabnties possess the sort of DIY auto-hype that makes publicists redundant. "Liam's the best singer of his generation," exclaimed proud sibling Noel Gallaghar during a recent interviaw aired on L.A.'s mod-rock powerhouse KROQ. "And I'm tha second."



→ **It should be noted,** however, that not everyone wants to be naked and famous. Tricky's claims to tha contrary notwithstanding. Consider, for exampla, Poison singar Bret Michaels's effort to stop the Internat Entertainment Group from marketing an old X-rated home video he made with heavy-matal squaeze toy Pamela Lee that purportedly contains "numerous closa-ups of [Michaels's] private parts." Contending that the video will cause irreparable harm to his career if it's released, Michaels has filed a $90 million lawsuit against I.E.G.



→ **Of course, in** these times of infectious narcissism, we all want to look our best. In genaral, it still appears thare's more prassura on women than men (with tha possibla exception of Bret Michaels) to measure up to their ideals. Last year, more than 85,000 women paid an averaga of $3,244 to make their braasts larger and mora synthatic-looking, while only 3,000 to 5,000 men parted with $5,000–10,000 to add an



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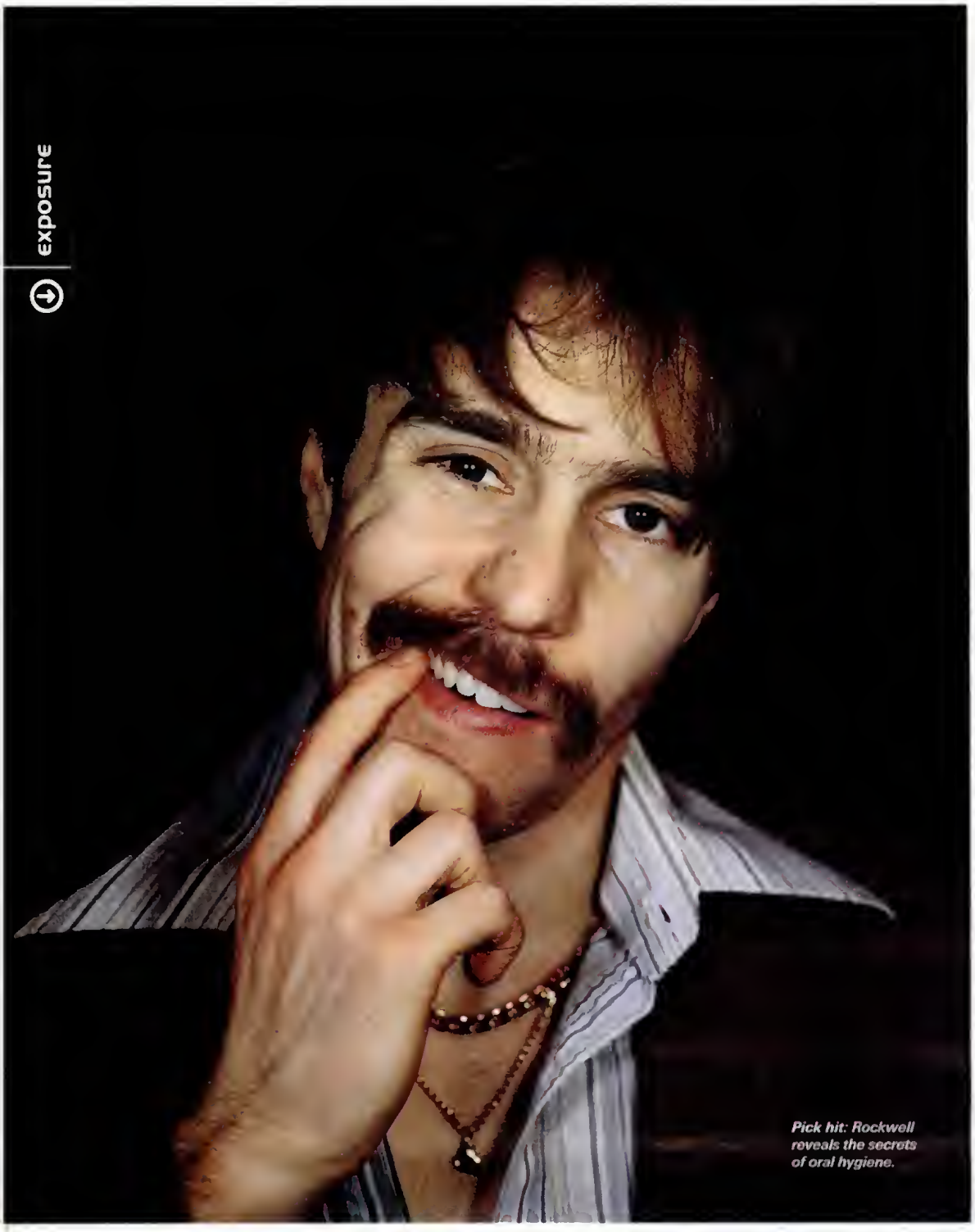
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Pick hit: Rockwell reveals the secrets of oral hygiene.

Planet Rockwell

Indie stalwart Sam Rockwell is ready for his close-up

Sam Rockwell has one of those weirdly appealing, malleable faces that gets an actor lots of "character" work. He's played crackheads and best-buddy types on television, plus an assortment of eccentrics in countless indie films. But thanks to starring roles in three upcoming movies, Rockwell may finally attain some of the leading-man status he desperately longs for: In John Hamburg's *Safe Men*, he's a slacker who gets sucked into the Jewish Mafia, and in Saul Rubinek's *Jerry end Tom*, he spins yet another variation on the low-life criminal mind. Yet it's his role in the subdued drama *Lawn Dogs*, directed by John Duigan, that's the most oddly moving of the three.

"I was really surprised at how much I wound up liking it," admits the 29-year-old actor, who says he was worried the film might turn out "too sweet and, like, wholesome." That it doesn't is largely due to Rockwell, who—in addition to shucking all his clothes (a common occurrence in Rockwell's films)—assiduously avoids sentiment in his portrayal of Trent, a hardscrabble loner who's charmed by a tenacious kid with a bum heart. "That's the one I really want people to see," he says earnestly. "It's my tribute to the working man, the underdog."

Which, in Rockwell's somewhat circuitous way of speaking, means it's a tribute to his own inner loser. Though he's been acting since he was ten (his parents, who divorced when he was five, were both aspiring actors), he's lost more parts than he can count to the likes of Leonardo DiCaprio and Kevin Bacon—stars whose mainstream success he fears he'll be unable to replicate. "You look at all these young actors today, and it's like, where are our future Gene Hackmans?" asks Rockwell. "I mean, it wasn't like this in the '70s. Back then, people were allowed to look funny." **Maureen Callahan**

ROCKWELL: DAVID BARRY; IGLESIAS: MARK SENNET/OUTLINE; HILFIGER: DAVID ALLEN/CORBIS

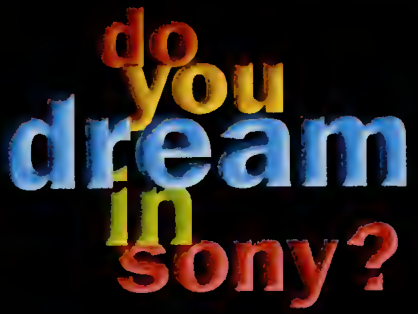
extra inch or two of hard, throbbing self-asteem. **→ Showing no self-**esteem problems whatsoever at the American Music Awards was Julio Iglesias, who triumphed over his son Enrique in the Favorite Latin Artist category. "I'm the best," boasted the self-assured troubadour, his tawny, hand-sanded countenance alight with pride. "I deserve this." **→ That kind of self-**assurance can backfire on occasion, especially if one's accomplishments are a bit more controversial than a really snappy album of tango tunes. Recent events regarding retired Argentine Navy Captain Alfredo Astiz confirm this sentiment. When the rogue officer was unable to keep himself from boasting to a weekly news magazine that he was "the best-trained man in Argentina to kill journalists and politicians," Argentine President Carlos Saul Menem expelled him from the navy, a development that left the notorious assassin suddenly without financial support or protection, and vulnerable to attack from his many enemies. **→ The Gallaghers,** yes. Anderson Lee, yes. Iglesias, maybe. Clearly, he deserves special treatment in the new VIP Room at Tommy Hilfiger's store in Beverly Hills, but would Iglesias get it? A strict protocol governs exactly which celebrity shoppers get access to the 400-square-foot fitting room and its full-service bar, satellite TV, suede sofas, and original artwork by Andy Warhol and Peter Beard. When A-list people are in the store, B-list people have to wait. Those who do gain access receive Tommy's almost extrasensory ministrations. "Gwen Stefani, singer of No Doubt, the new Madonna... " Hilfiger told the *New York Times*. "We suddenly realized that we should have not only Dom Pengnon but Cristal." **→ C-, D-, and E-listers,** take heart. The democratization of egomania via technology marches ever onward. Two years ago, college student Jennifer Ringley pioneered the exhibitionist-next-door genre of Web-based entertainment

a leap of imagination is worth more
than a bank vault of knowledge





creativity does not suffer sameness well
every genius is born into this world without
awareness of, or particular interest in,
the word "impossible" few things in life
are more rewarding than burning brain
cells on a fresh new idea



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SONY

The Band as Brand

If only Martha Stewart had a record

In the late '90s, brend extansion is Americe's prevailing ethos. Movies beget action figures, sitcoms spewn greeting cards, cable sports chennels metamorphose into upscale hemburger emporiums. Although rock bands have been slow to capitelize on their brend, thet's chenging quickly. According to Ira Meyer, publisher of *The Licensing Letter*, music merchandise now generates more than $1 billion a year in revenue. Along with providing additional revenue to ertists, the rock merchandising trend has et leest one other positive effect: While rock criticism is feirly well-trod ground et this point, rock merchendise criticism offers a whole new opportunity for introverts to shere their overanalysis with one enother. **G. Beato**



Mr Happy Drawers

DESCRIPTION: Shiny underpants ($30) available in purple, bleck, or white, with MR. HAPPY written on the weistbend in e funky-ess, new-power-generation font. **HOW IT EXTENDS THE BRAND:** ♀ is sexy es hell. Thase are sexy-es-hell underpants. **LIKELIHOOD THAT ARTIST ACTUALLY USES PRODUCT:** Frequent usage suspected. Could be his own best customer.



Rolling Stones Folding Chair



DESCRIPTION: A bleck metal folding chair ($149.99) with a gold Stones tongue emblezoned on the seat cushion end the Bridges to Babylon tour logo on the back. **HOW IT EXTENDS THE BRAND:** Folds when you went extra room for Mick-style dencing. Unfolds when you need a little Charlie-styla rest. **LIKELIHOOD THAT ARTISTS ACTUALLY USE PRODUCT:** Keith might keep e couple eround for when guests come over to pley cribbage.

Fear Factory Pocket Watch



DESCRIPTION: A who-you-callin'-sissy?–style pocket wetch (ebout $50), complete with leather strep end metal chain. **HOW IT EXTENDS THE BRAND:** Society is e soulless, mindless, spirit-crushing conspiracy egeinst individuel free will, but thet doesn't meen you shouldn't be punctuel. **LIKELIHOOD THAT ARTISTS ACTUALLY USE PRODUCT:** Moderate. They make pretty good parting gifts for groupies.

Mötley Brüe Soda

DESCRIPTION: Just 5,000 cases of Mötley Brüe ($2.00 per bottle) ware brewed by the Skeleteens sode company. If you look hard, you can still find Mötley Brüe in various retail outlets, though there's not much demend for cobelt-colored, jelapaño- and ginsang-enhanced soda that turns your feces blue. **HOW IT EXTENDS THE BRAND:** Downing a six-pack of Brües, then taking a big blue dump on your crummy motel room bed is a great way to express old-school headbanger rock'n'roll rebellion. **LIKELIHOOD THAT ARTISTS ACTUALLY USE PRODUCT:** Low. Mötley Brüe is hard to come by, especielly in correctional institutions.



Michael Jackson Mystery Drink

DESCRIPTION: A carboneted peach-flavored beverage ($0.75) peckaged in 250 ml cans (aveil-eble in Germeny end other Western European countries). The can features the same graphics es Jeckson's *HIStory* elbum. **HOW IT EXTENDS THE BRAND:** The mesks, the rumors, the isolated estate, the mysterious peech-flavored beverage: Micheel Jeckson is all about intrigue. **LIKELIHOOD THAT ARTIST ACTUALLY USES PRODUCT:** Indeterminete.

Grateful Dead Sports Bra



DESCRIPTION: The Greteful Deed Sports Bra ($24.50) comes in black, green, or purple, and is embroidered with e "bolt" logo. **HOW IT EXTENDS THE BRAND:** Lots of ectivities associated with the Deed—e.g., Hecky Sack, freeky whirling, hitching e ride on e bumpy fletbed—require stylish, comfortable support. **LIKELIHOOD THAT ARTISTS ACTUALLY USE PRODUCT:** Probably not, unless, of course, the raunion tour gets raucous.

The Elvis and Graceland Tribute Rifle

DESCRIPTION: A working Winchester Model 94 rifle ($2,100) edorned with imeges of Elvis, Elvis's TCB logo, the Officiel Elvis Presley Enterprises trademark, end copious other decoretive details. **HOW IT EXTENDS THE BRAND:** Elvis *loved* e good Winchester. **LIKELIHOOD THAT ARTIST ACTUALLY USES PRODUCT:** Unlikely. Photo I.D. required.

with JenniCam, an ongoing experiment in 24-hour auto-surveillance "When I began, I mey have been searching for e bit of approval from othera," says Ringley, whose nonprofit aite has inspired a legion of more explicit, more commercially minded flauntre-



preneurs "But now I hava the stability of self-esteem to know how I feel about myself." Of course, 25 million hits per dey which JenniCam curtantly receives, can't burt.

→ By the way, in case you were wondering Approximately 20,000 quarrelsome exhibitionists, either too lezy to set up their own webcams or too timid to carry the whole show by themselves, audition for MTV's *The Real World* each year.

→ How long until the Golden Globes edds Best Webcam Performance to its collection of celebrity-affirmation statuary? Maybe sooner than you'd think—the entertainment industry's always looking for new ways to congratulate itself According to *Variety*, there were et least 252 awards events in 1997, with more than 3,000 prizes



→ While life's winners bask in the ego-engorging glow of lustrous trophies and paparazzi flashbulbs, judges around the nation ara subjecting life's losers to an old form of humiliating justice—public shame Get caught stealing e six-pack from 7-Elevan? Then you may have to loiter in front of tha stora holding a sign warning others not to make the same mistake According to the *Boston Globe*, public humiliation as punishment is growing increasingly popular. Advocates of the practice say that it works as a deterrent and that it's much cheaper than incarceration Critics feel "humiliation only reinforces feelings of worthlessness that laad to crime "

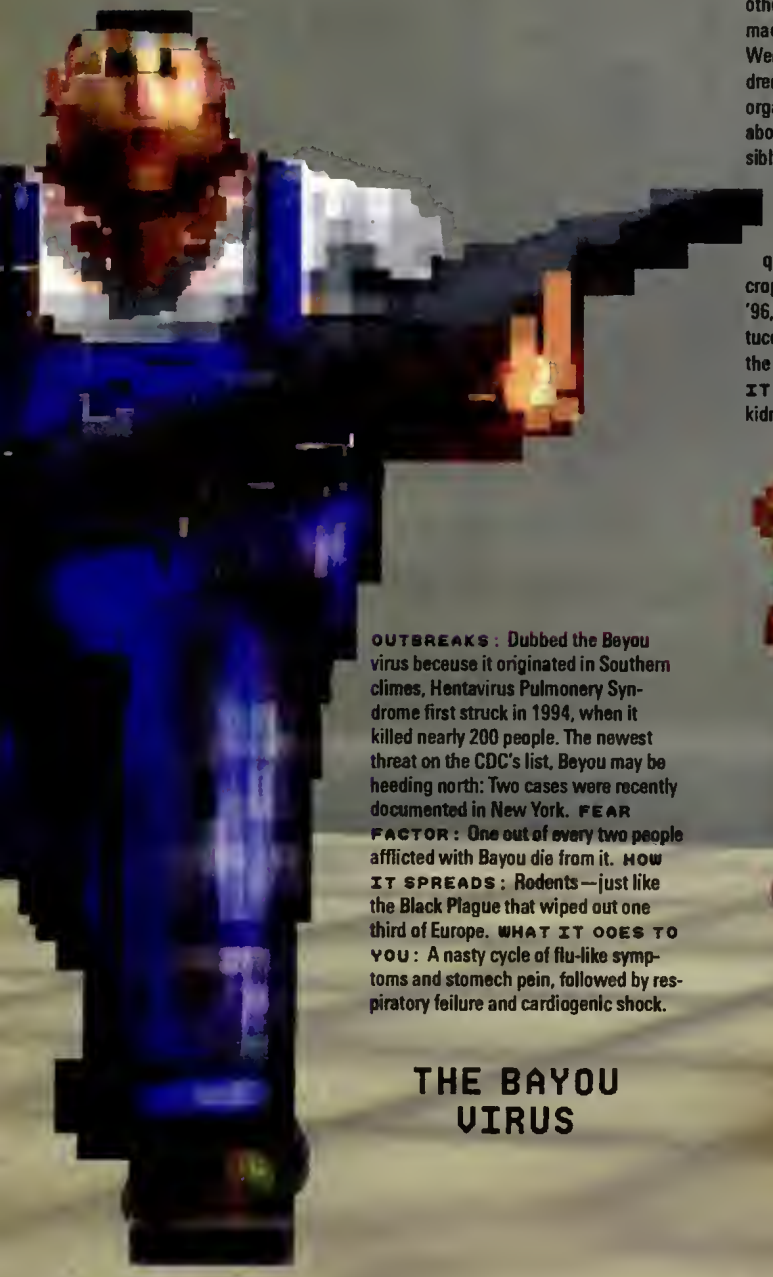
→ However, it seems that Americans are not feeling so worthless these deys During the first helf of last year, according to the FBI, every city in Amerca experienced a drop in crime ●

GOLDEN GLOBE: GREGG DE GUIRE/LONDON FEATURES

License to Ill

The new killer viruses: how our future seems ever more like a video game

The early '90s enthem "Touch Me, I'm Sick" might be more ept for the lete '90s. For as we stare down the millennium, it seems the biggest threat to our nation's health isn't teen pregnency or Hermony Korine films but a peck of deedly new viruses spreeding our way. Fiendish microbes hide in what we eet, what we drink, end, of course, what we bed, public health officials warn, and some cen outwit almost any medicine. While the news medie is telling us to be very afreid, let's face it: It's hard to get worked up over en enemy you can't even see. To help ID whet's out to get you, here's e pixilated look at some of the scary contegions currently on the Netional Centers for Diseese Control's hit list. **Shoshana Berger**



OUTBREAKS: Dubbed the Beyou virus beceuse it originated in Southern climes, Hentavirus Pulmonery Syndrome first struck in 1994, when it killed nearly 200 people. The newest threat on the CDC's list, Beyou may be heeding north: Two cases were recently documented in New York. **FEAR FACTOR:** One out of every two people afflicted with Bayou die from it. **HOW IT SPREADS:** Rodents—just like the Black Plague that wiped out one third of Europe. **WHAT IT OOES TO YOU:** A nasty cycle of flu-like symptoms and stomech pein, followed by respiratory feilure and cardiogenic shock.

THE BAYOU VIRUS

OUTBREAKS: In 1996, en infant died end several others turned gravely ill efter drinking Odwelle juice made from E. coli–tainted apples. Undercooked Wendy's specials were blamed for killing three children in 1993. **FEAR FACTOR:** Now thet raw end organic foods ere ell the rage, the CDC is concerned about food-borne pathogens—in particuler, the possibly lethel H7 E. coli strein—running emok. Last year, the U.S. Agricultural Department recalled an unprecedented 25 million pounds of beef contamineted with E. coli (thet's 100 million quarter-pounders). **HOW IT SPREADS:** Any crop thet grows near e herd of cattle is suspect. (In '96, forty-nine cases of E. coli were caused by lettuce.) Undercooked beef and unpasteurized milk ere the pathogen's favorite modes of transport. **WHAT IT OOES TO YOU:** Bloody dierrhea. Can lead to kidney failure in the elderly end young children.



E. COLI

OUTBREAKS: Spookily, most drug-resistant infections occur in hospitals, end effect 2 million patients every year. **FEAR FACTOR:** Since popping penicillin has become e racreetional sport, we're currently seeing the emergence of Mensa-style bacterie thet heve learned to just say no to our drugs. The only other line of defense egeinst eilments such as pneumonie end staph infections is a pricey, herd-to-find entimicrobial agent. **HOW IT SPREADS:** Germ-infested hands of health-care workers. **WHAT IT OOES TO YOU:** Even e common ear infection can turn fatal.



ANTIBIOTIC-RESISTANT BACTERIA

17 mg. "tar", 1.2 mg. nicotine av. per cigarette by FTC method.

SURGEON GENERAL'S WARNING: Cigarette Smoke Contains Carbon Monoxide.

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SURGEON GENERAL'S WARNING: Cigarette Smoke Contains Carbon Monoxide.

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OUTBREAKS: In 1979, in the Russian city of Sverdlovsk, 64 people died from an anthrax leak at a nearby biological weapons facility. Biohazard Saddam Hussain has used it twice, once against the Kurds and once against his own people (just to be sure it worked). And this February, two men in Ohio were charged with possessing what was originally believed to be anthrax. **FEAR FACTOR:** Any enterprising bioterrorist can cook up anthrax in a kitchen, and when dispensed effectively, one gram can kill 10 million people. The U.S. government will begin inoculating our armed forces this spring, but the vaccine is too expensive to distribute to lowly civilians. **HOW IT SPREADS:** Though it doesn't spread as fast as nerve gas, anthrax is a hardy little spore that can persist in the environment for decades after its release. **WHAT IT DOES TO YOU:** If inhaled, produces severe respiratory problems that usually end in death one to two days later.



ANTHRAX



HUMAN PAPILLOMA VIRUS (GENITAL WARTS)

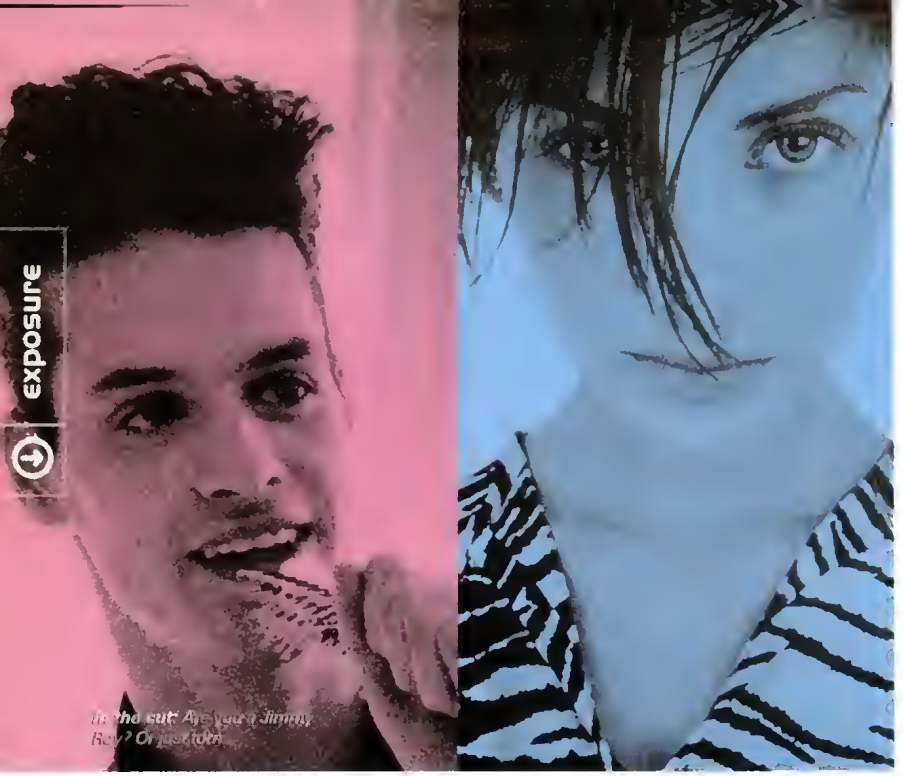
OUTBREAKS: HIV is still *el jefe* of STDs, but the acronym HPV is being used to describe a deadly new strain of genital warts, the most common sexually transmitted disease in the U.S. for the past decade. It's estimated that 30–75 percent of sexually active adults have warts where it counts. **FEAR FACTOR:** Fifteen of the 60–80 varieties of HPV are likely to cause cervical cancer in women, and 20 percent of college-age women contract a strain of HPV after their original sin. Worse, condoms may not cover enough surface area to protect you from this gift that keeps on giving. **HOW IT SPREADS:** Below-the-belt contact. **WHAT IT DOES TO YOU:** Cauliflower-like lesions and genital cancers.

INFLUENZA

OUTBREAKS: In 1918, the Spanish Flu—an outbreak even more devastating than the Black Plague—wiped out 40 million people worldwide. The new terror is the H5 flu strain. Once thought to be strictly for the birds, this "chicken virus" killed six people in Hong Kong last year. **FEAR FACTOR:** Because modern travel has made it nearly impossible to contain an outbreak, health officials are planning for a possible repeat of the 1918 pandemic. The virus is highly unstable and mutates fast—rendering flu shots more of a placebo than a panacea. **HOW IT SPREADS:** Influenza aerosol is stronger than Joven musk, hanging around for up to ten minutes after a sneeze. **WHAT IT DOES TO YOU:** The usual nose/throat routine now comes with the added bonus of possible death.



ILLUSTRATION BY MATTHEW SCHWENK



In the cut: Ay, you a Jimmy Ray? Or just rich...

Hair Apparent?

Jimmy Ray vs. Natalie Imbruglia

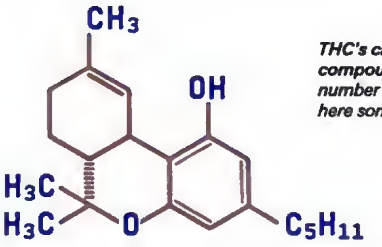
Disposable pop stars may be today's rula, but they'll soon bacoma tomorrow's substituta taachars. So we should enjoy the easily digested musical delights and equally innocuous good looks of Natalie Imbruglia and Jimmy Ray whila we still can. What's spectacular about them isn't, of coursa, the way thair music dafies ganra boundaries, but how thair hair does. Ray's perilously balanced pompadour is undoubtedly the mora awesoma of the pair, but hair watchars pradict that it's Imbruglia's tossad-off tousle that will become the "new Rachel." So which trim will make the cut? Hera, tha tale of tape.

Ana Marie Cox

	Jimmy Ray	Natalie Imbruglia
Estimated prep time	45 minutes	five minutes
You will need	blow dryer, vented brush, Aveda Brilliantine ($18.00), Bumble & Bumble Freeze-Hold ($25.00), willingness to duck through doorways	fingers, three-days-worth of greasy build-up, Kiehl's Silk Groom ($15.50)
One false move and you will look	like you just got seperated from the rest of She Na Na	like you just got (or just shot) up
Song lyric that takes on unintended depth when applied to singer's relationship to his or her hair	"I'm tired of people laughing in my face."	"There's just so many things that I can't touch."
Susceptible audience	Vince Vaughn	*Jane* readers
References this historical figure	Madame de Pompadour	*Ally McBeal*'s Calista Flockhart
Immovable object or unstoppable force?	Immovable object	Unstoppable force

Numbers Game

The chronic paranoia of "420"



THC's chemical compound: The number 420 is in here somewhere.

On April 20, at 4:20 P.M., the nation's chronic pothaads will fira up in honor of a growing obsession with the number 420. The phenomenon started in tha aarly '90s in San Rafael, Califomia, where 420 was allegedly the police code for "marijuana smoking in progress." "Tha intant," says *High Times* executive editor Stava Bloom, who first spottad tha numbers on a Grataful Dead flyer in 1990, "was to create a community of smokers at that time of day to rebel against the police arrest code." Although a spokesman for the Marin County Sheriff's department daniad tha coda's existanca, tha number has nonethalass achieved a kind of cult status: Burners light up daily at 4:20 (P.M. is preferred), and they've designated the date 4/20 as their own high holiday.

It sounds more lika urban myth, but 420's true believers swear that tha truth is out thera. In *Pulp Fiction*, for instance, when Bruce Willis is about to take on his hick captors, a prominently displayed clock reads 4:20; in a "Got Milk?" TV spot, a milkless young man on a bus trip digs into a bag of salty snacks, than seas a sign that raads: NEXT FOOD, 420 MILES; and a public clock at the corner of Haight and Ashbury in San Francisco has been stopped at 4:20 for years. Like, totally Pynchon.

One story that's sure to maka the rounds at this month's 420 festivals in San Francisco and College Park, Maryland, features the patron saint of kind bud, Jarry Garcia. He was found dead on August 9, 1995 at a mighty suspicious 4:23 A.M. Guess what he was doing three minutas befora he axpired.

Mark S. Borden

Polarity

Wasn't that slick and twisted?

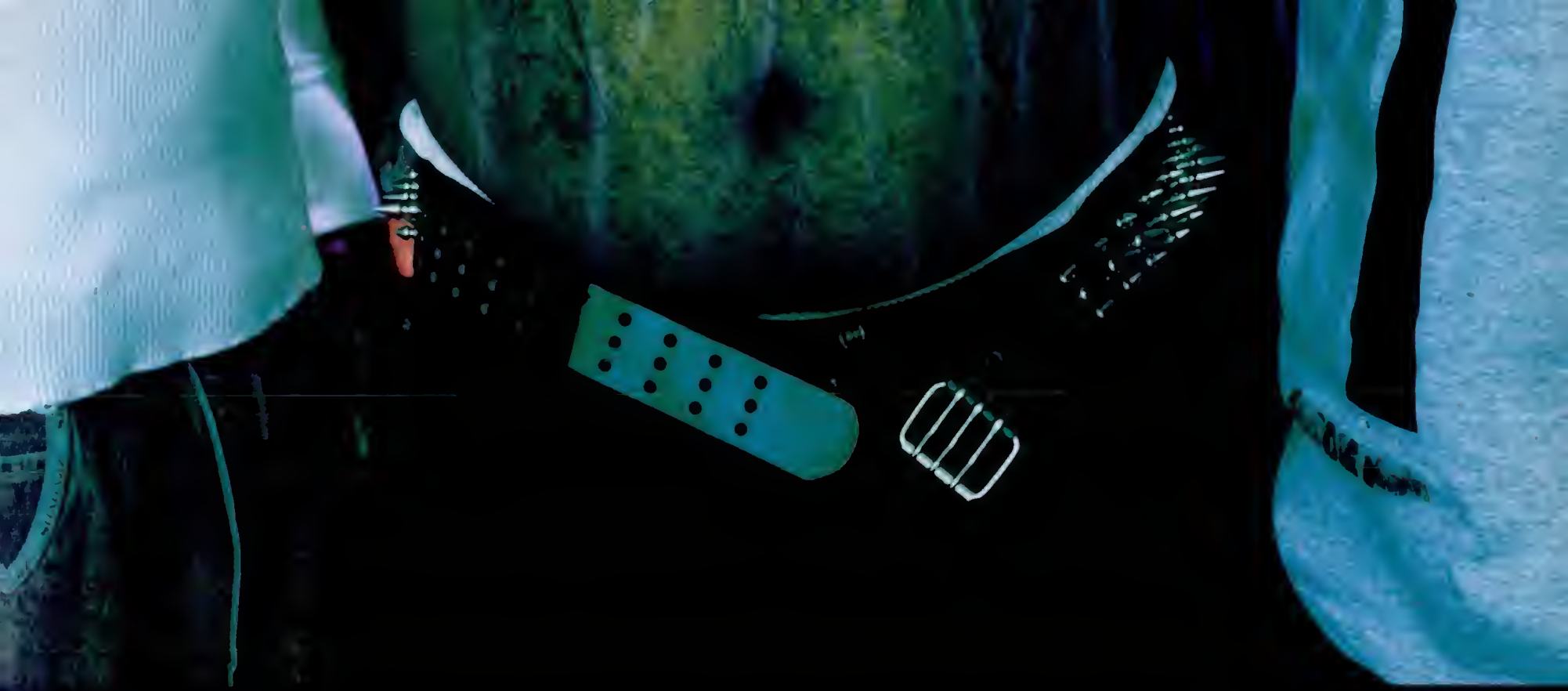


Heather Havrilesky

ILLUSTRATION COURTESY OF *HIGH TIMES*


Portrait of Thomas Howard, Peter Paul Rubens, 1629
Brewed to the same
exacting standards since the
early days of heavy metal.
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IMPORTED
Grolsch
PREMIUM
LAGER
Master Dutch Brewers Since 1615
Grolsch





Good ol' boyz: from left, Khujo, Big Gipp, Cee-Lo, and T-Mo.

Goodie Will Hunting

Atlanta's Goodie Mob: hip-hop that's finger-lickin' good

Photograph by **Joseph Cultice**

You just don't expect Cee-Lo to be a Billy Idol fan. Sure, the roundest member of Goodie Mob is not averse to sporting a copious amount of black, but it's usually in the form of a triple-phat down jacket. And while he's quick to flash a smile that, if seen from the right angle, is suspiciously similar to an Idol sneer, he isn't exactly familiar with white weddings. "Nah," he deadpans, "I been to some black weddings, though." Nonetheless, the man with the altar-boy voice that propels Atlanta's spiritually infused hip-hop foursome remembers vibin' to Idol back in the day.

"I listened to all types of music growing up," says Cee-Lo. "Run-D.M.C., Sugar Hill Gang, 2 Live Crew, but I also liked Al Green, Led Zeppelin, and yeah, Billy Idol."

After coming together in the halls of Benjamin Elijah Mays High School in southwest Atlanta, the Mob (Cee-Lo, Khujo, T-Mo, and Big Gipp) helped introduce the world to the taste of deep-fried hip-hop. Initially as much a concept as a group—depending on who you ask, Goodie Mob either stands for "The Good Die Mostly Over Bullshit," "God Is Every Man of Blackness," or "A Goodie Bag of Musical Messages and Flavas"—the foursome first appeared on *Southernplayalisticadillacmuzik*, the thumping debut from fellow Atlantans OutKast. Then, in 1995, Gipp & Co. served up *Soul Food*, a smooth collection of harmonious jams infused with live instrumentation and aresilient, if at times preachy, hope for the future.

Though that album's follow-up, *Still Standing*, features the tight harmonies and finger-lickin' beats that first set them apart, it's less reliant on groove and live arrangements than the group's debut. In fact, a more radical departure was originally planned for the record. At first, Cee-Lo wanted more of a Portishead sound, maybe bring in soma guitars, add some ghetto bass. But it's hard to escape where you come from, and in tha and, tha group stayed closer to their Southern roots.

"In New York, in L.A., it's money, business, all the time," says T-Mo. "But in Atlanta it's about soul, the civil rights movement, Martin Luther King, Jr., Elijah Mohammed. We have more of a spiritual influence, and that shows in what we say."

To hear Cee-Lo tell it, the foursome isn't just bringing it all back home. They're making the world safe again for old-school dedication. "I look at hip-hop as being much more of a moral obligation than as entertainment or a career," he says. "I think we're one of the few groups that do that, without seeming like we come from outer space or soma shit." Then he flashes that Idol-esque grin. "People don't like moralizing, no matter what it sounds like."

Zev Borow

exposure



The remarkable thing is, you can't even see it from the narrow stretch of highway that takes you there.

Instead, you are struck only by the rich green hue of the surrounding hills for which the town was named.

In short, it's about as far removed as you can get from how anyone might picture the setting for a car factory.

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SATURN.



C'mon and ride it: a street team in their natural element.





Easy Riders

Forget mountain bikes. BMXs are the real street machines

When BMX bikes first popped up in the early '80s, they seemed deeply uncool. Dismissed as dirt bike wannabes, the knobby-tired two-wheelers were hopelessly adolescent, and anyone riding one to school risked serious nerd status. Now the BMX is reemerging, as hipsters discover that the burly cycles make ideal urban cruisers. The bikes, which were saved from utter oblivion by an underground following of hard-core riders and West Coast punks, weigh in at a tank-like 30–40 pounds, and their single gear is well-suited for navigating perilous cityscapes. Vintage models are rare. Instead, in-the-know riders spend $400–600 on in-vogue brands such as 2Hip, Hoffman, and GT.

Unlike other woeful '80s accessories, BMX bikes haven't been retooled as a camp gimmick. BMXers *mean* it, man, and they've formed a highly reverential street culture that's going strong in concrete jungles everywhere. Tripping out on steps, benches, and rails, BMX enthusiasts "are getting really technical and pulling some sick stuff," says Steve Swopes, a San Francisco rider. In the process, riders have even managed to get props from their old arch-nemeses: skateboarders. "It used to be that if you were on a BMX bike, people assumed you were a kid, and they'd hassle you," says Swopes. "Now skateboarders pick on the in-line skaters." **Jim Humes**

IDIOT/SAVANT

Little Trouble Girl

Elizabeth Wurtzel outdoes herself

Writer Elizabeth Wurtzel has built an entire career on her shaky mental state. She first went public with her private hell in *Prozac Nation*, a depression memoir that sought to explicate a sour generation. But Wurtzel's reductive theorizing, coupled with her penchant for posing in half-naked states of repose, established her mainly as hot damaged goods. Now, at a time when writers like Andrew Solomon are cranking out their own doleful chronicles, Wurtzel has recast herself as a postfeminist critic: Her new book, *Bitch: In Praise of Difficult Women* (Doubleday), is ostensibly a damning tract on how confused and confusing women (Delilah, Courtney Love, Amy Fisher) are made to suffer for being hot and bothered, but it also could have been subtitled *In Praise of Me*. **Maureen Callahan**

➜ *Prozac Nation* was hyped as the first book to address despair, twentynothing style, and Wurtzel, with her nose ring and FTW ("Fuck the World") tattoo, was marketad as the hipstar depressive's mascot. Probably, tha mass adoration of similarly troubled kids only made things worse. "I find myself with the urge to make people know...that I am a real sicko," she writes now. "[I am] a depressive of a much higher order than all these happy pill-poppers with their low-level sorrow."

➜ Wurtzel's musings on Marilyn Monroe, Anne Sexton, and Margaux Hemingway all reach one conclusion: Manic-depressives rock! They're edgy, sexy, and a femme force to be reckoned with. Wurtzel—who once held her friends captive while she sat for hours with a grapefruit knife to her wrist—has clearly modeled herself on Sexton's brand of mania. Of a '60s dinner party where the poet spent hours moaning and writhing over a tiny cigarette burn on her hand, Wurtzel exclaims, "What a triumph of the will! What a spirited assertion of self!" Who cares if Sexton killed herself; self-flagellation, as Wurtzel can attest, is a hell of a career move.

➜ In depression, as in advertising, image is everything. "Madness has always had great visuals," writes Wurtzel, "often creating a freakish beauty...so strange that mystification becomes inevitable." Soft-focus inner torment doesn't always move the merch, though—witness the photos on Wurtzel's new book jacket. As the Harvard-educated theorist once noted in a magazine essay, she looks "very fuckable."



The trou-dropping "sicko": Elizabeth Wurtzel.

BMX: EVAN KAFKA; SPECIAL THANKS TO BROOKLYN MACHINE WORKS; WURTZEL: JAYNE WEXLER/OUTLINE.



see something shiny AND wander off for A WHILE.





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Start



Spiderman, Spiderman: Transmet's *heavily armed, perpetually smoking journalist, Spider Jerusalem.*

Dark City

The strange urban visions of *Transmetropolitan*

"Wouldn't the whole Diana thing have been more interesting," ponders British writer Warren Ellis, "if she'd been caught having sex with Things From Beyond Space in the middle of Pall Mall before spontaneously exploding? Wouldn't that have done people some good?" From this same pensive mind comes *Transmetropolitan*, a comic book series that follows the smart-mouthed, heavily armed, perpetually smoking journalist Spider Jerusalem, who lives in a future so grimy and chaotic it could be the present—except for the aliens. Outfitted in water-walking Air Jesus sneakers and snacking on caribou eyes from the local Eskimo fast-food place, Spider tries to make sense of a city where a new religion starts every hour and "buy-bombs" upload ads into people's dreams. Drawn by Darick Robertson with an eye for claustrophobia, urban sprawl, and sensory overload, *Transmet* is brilliant future-shock commentary. But even as its first few issues are collected into a book, *Transmetropolitan: Back on the Street* (Helix/DC), Ellis is off channeling his strangeness through other projects. As he finishes up his bleak, disturbing *StormWatch* series, he'll be attending to "Smoke Damage," a Web-based forum for his acidic rants (http://www.warrenellis.com), and the forthcoming *Panic Nation*, an occult comic starring "a young man with a poisoned family tree who lost his virginity at the age of 14 to an insane telepathic nun with stone teeth from a secret convent outlawed by the Pope." One can only speculate how Diana would fit in there.

Douglas Wolk







Killing Jokes

Not-so-funny guy Neil Hamburger gets raw

"No more boos, please..." says Neil Hamburger at one point during the bad-joke train wreck of his latest live record, *Raw Hamburger*. As a comedian who records for Drag City Records, Hamburger, by most accounts, is not so funny. But how does this distinguish him from, say, Carrot Top or Adam Sandler? Created and performed by underground prankster Gregg Turkington (who owns the label Amarillo), Hamburger is a living parody of the worst in stand-up comedy. Listening to his records is an acutely painful experience; both humor and pathos gradually build as the lamest stand-up techniques—the dumb catch phrase, the pointless contemporary reference—are trotted out in a profoundly clumsy manner. ("My manager told me my act was getting stale—the motherfucking cocksucker," he monotones during *Raw*, a blatantly insincere attempt to attract a "young audience" by peppering his act with random obscenities. "So I asked some bitches I knew, and they agreed—the fucking sluts.") Though all this has made Hamburger the heir apparent to Andy Kaufman's infamous "anti-comedy" tradition, his act isn't likely to soon grace traditional stand-up forums such as the *Late Show* or *An Evening at the Improv*. "I have not been invited," Hamburger explains. "But that's okay. The pizza parlors I perform in are just fine, as long as people are laughing." They're not, though. Which, of course, is funny.



Brian Doharty

the mix

delivering the world in 323 words or less

Pander Bros. [artists] Cool-guy creators of comic books (*Triple X*) and movie shorts (*The Operation*) cough up *Secret Broadcast*, a CD-and-comic-book combination celebrating pirate radio.

DJ Andy Smith [DJ] Cuts surprising mixes of Tom Jones, the Spencer Davis Group, Grandmaster Flash. Signed to London Records after guesting on Boston's WFNX. Smoooooth.

index [magazine] Low-budg, supra-indie bimonthly. Like *Interview* but with cool people and no dorky headlines.

The Simulator [Web site] Reveals what your life could look like if you worked at McDonald's. (http://www.conceptlab.com/simulator)

Solex vs. the Hitmeister [album] Dutch record-store owner Elisabeth Easelink (e.k.a. Solex) delivers (presumably) the first-ever electronica homage to a Dutch moped company. (Matador)

cheesy mustache [hip facial-hair totem] This is basically David Arquette's fault.

Iron Chef [TV show] Bizarre, enthralling Japanese-language food show on which chefs cook combatively. Sample subtitle: "Unprecedented use of bacon!" (Check local listings.)

Cartoon Network [cable network] Poised to blow up Comedy Central–style. Features the incandescent brilliance of *Cow & Chicken*, a *South Park* for eight-year-olds. Oh wait....

The Last Days of Disco [movie] Whit Stillman's disco-age tribute as seen, of course, through the eyes of white, disenfranchised preps who *never* shut up.

Willow [teen idol] *Buffy*'s intelligeek sidekick proves a future career in library science can be rewarding and dangerous.

RareMusic [Web site] Sound clips that fell through the cracks. Arcane! Pointless! Fun! (http://www.raremusic.com)

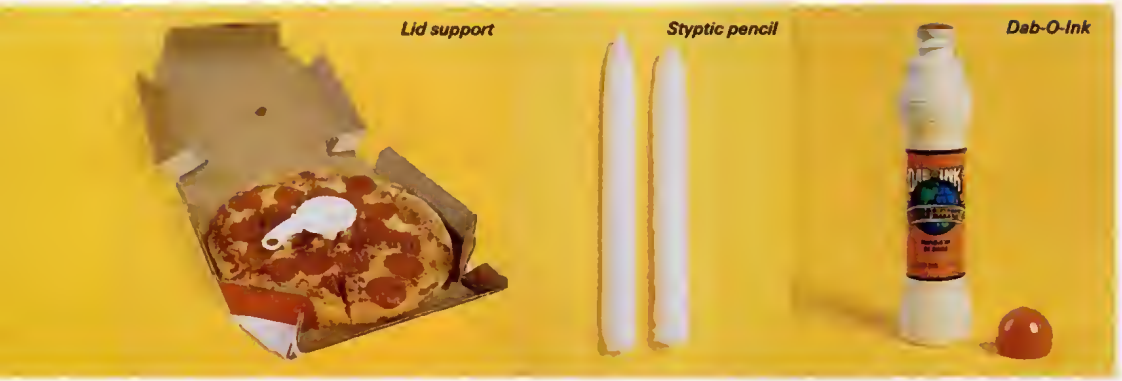
declaring the superiority of British culture [media fetish] Wow. Aren't. Those. English people. Cool.

Key

- New
- Lingering
- Blowing up
- Forthcoming
- Recommended
- Avoid at all costs
- Consume in moderation
- Will impress your friends
- So bad it's good
- Surprising
- Unfortunate
- Retro

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Outline
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INCONSPICUOUS CONSUMPTION

In Praise of the Doohickey

The secret life of super-simple things. By Paul Lukas

As the consumer landscape overflows with electro-digital complexity, it's no surprise certain malcontents are advocating a return to simplicity. I've got nothing against simplicity per se, but its most extreme proponents these days tend to push an annoyingly touchy-feely agenda that centers around activities such as quilting, or whittling, or growing your own rutabagas. Fortunately, there are meny ways to get in touch with the simpler things in life. Next time you heve e pizza delivered, for example, check out that little three-legged plastic doohickey stuck in the middla of the pie to keep the top of the box from smushing into the cheese.

That three-legged doohickay is called a lid support. It may not look like much, and it probably cost your pizzeria less then a penny, but it has saved meny e pizza from an unhappy fata. The lid support is so innocuous, and its functional utility so efficiently matter-of-fact, it hes become the perfect example of a product too simple for its own good: Everyone knows whet it is but most people fail to grasp just how profoundly it has improved our junk-food lives. Hiding in plain sight, it has become classically inconspicuous—a stealth element in contemporary consumer culture.

Lid supports may seem timeless, but they've only been in widespread use since the mid-1980s. Nobody keeps track of how many are mede, but we're cleerly dealing with *a lot* of simplicity here: Avon Plestics, a Brooklyn company, crenks out about 700,000 a day, tops in the field. (Pizza Hut, until recently, made its own lid supports—328 million of them a yeer.)

As lid supports have become de rigueur (especially for pizzerles that use the flimsier paperboard pizza boxes instead of the sturdier but more expensive corrugated variety), some dubious attempts have been made to jazz them up. Avon Plestics makes four different models, including one that doubles as a primitive pizza slicer, while LoTech Industries, a Colorado operation whose name provides an interesting case of truth in advertising, markets a lid support that can also be used as a spinning top end another that serves as a spatula. Personally, I can do without these creative varietions: The product's genius—end the Catch-22 that defines its low profile—is its one-note utility.

Along these lines, consider also styptic pencils. Among the coolest items available at the drugstore (and not just because "styptic" is such an excellent word), styptic pencils are so visually and functionally unglamorous they've never gotten their due, even during their heyday decades ago. Made from aluminum sulfete, styptic pencils typically cost less than a buck epiece and are almost prototypically plain-looking, but they can magically stem the bleeding from e shaving nick in no time flat—much eesier and more effective than applying pesky little scraps of toilet paper. The catch is that styptic pencils really sting at the point of contact—it feels like the bloody spot on your face has been dipped in battery acid. But this discomfort turns out to be one of the pencil's key selling points—the more it hurts, tha better you can tell it's working.

Styptic pencils, much like lid supports, are best marketed as simply as possible, without extraneous bells end whistles. For an instructive case study, check out Sentinel Styptic Pencils (Sentinel Consumer Products, Inc.), whose packaging features a spectacularly inappropriate photo, which looks like it was cribbed from a 1970s box of condoms, depicting a dreamy young couple in outdated clothing, lost in e haze of romantic bliss, their lives no doubt enriched beyond measure by this wondrous product. Memo to Sentinel: Styptic pencils are cool, but they're not *that* cool.

Bingo, however, is ebout as cool as it gets, albeit in a sub-bowling, hipster-slumming sorta way. (Bingo humor: How do you get 50 old ladies to shout "Fuck!"? Get ona old lady to shout "Bingo!") On your next visit to the church social hell, check out the magnificently simple Dab-O-Ink (C.J. Vanne, Inc.), billed by its manufacturer es the "world's finest bingo marker." Strictly speaking, it's just a glorified Magic Marker, but its flat tip makes it ill-suited for virtually all non-bingo uses—an excellent example of how simplicity can lead to extreme functional specificity. Moreover, the Dab-O-Ink is a definitive cultural totem, as essential and ubiquitous in its world as the lid support has become in everyone else's. Which is just as well, since most elderly bingo players can no longer eat solid foods like pizze anyway. ●

Avon Plastics Co., 451 Grand St., Brooklyn, NY 11211; LoTech Industries, Inc., 620 Miller Ct., Ste. 207, Lakewood, CO 80215; Sentinel Consumer Products, Inc., 7750 Tyler Blvd., Mentor, OH 44060; C.J. Venne, Inc., 1425 Hanford St., Levittown, PA 19057

Readers, manufacturers, end publicists are encouraged to send products, gadgets, promotional literature, and suggestions to Peul Lukas, *Spin*, 6 W. 18th St., New York, NY 10011. E-mail: consumer@interport.net.

DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERISTICS

Lando Calrissian and Friends

Diesel nylon jacket



Person: male, 29, gourmet pizza chef **Quote:** "Today I made *the* best pie ever. Feta, spinech, seuce just so. It was heavenly. The woman who ordered it was so impressed that she ripped her clothes off and did me *right there on the counter*." **Wants:** To make his girlfriend shudder. **Needs:** Young offspring to corrupt. **Favorite Subject:** How he never washes his hair anymore beceuse he just doesn't care. **Biggest Secret:** He has e colorist.

Canon ELPH camera



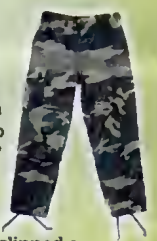
Person: male, 29, lawyer **Quote:** "So I figured, I'll go out with these hot chicks I know, and then other hot chicks will see me and think I must have *somathing* going on. Dasperate measures, yes, but these are despereta timas." **Wants:** A girlfriand. A hot one. **Needs:** Hair. **Favorite Subject:** The latest installment in his so-far-unsuccessful effort to woo an engeged colleague into going out with him. **Biggest Secret:** Ha's been told he's just like George from *Seinfeld*. More than once.

Fab 208 baby-blue fuzzy tank top



Person: female, 22, photo assistant **Quote:** "I was like, '*Hell*-o! Wetch where you're swinging that Glo-stick, punk.'" **Wants:** To make it crystal claar that she doesn't take crap from anyona, leest of all club kids with attitudes. **Needs:** To stop being a club kid with an attitude. **Favorite Subject:** How the "bridge and tunnel" crowd is killing the scena. **Biggest Secret:** She wes a Tesle groupie when she wes 13.

Army surplus camouflage pants



Person: male, 18, student **Quote:** "Forty bucks for the original Rancor! Now if I can find an ATAT Walker with no pieces missing, I'll be whole." **Wants:** The complate original *Star Wars* collection. **Needs:** A lot more money. **Favorite Subject:** How ha slipped a Toys 'R' Us employee $5 to bring out a Slave Leia Action Figura from tha beck. **Biggest Secret:** Every time he meets someone, he has to struggle to keep from seying, "I'm Lando Calrissian, the administrator of this facility. And who might you be?" **Haathar Havrilesky**

TOP LEFT MATTHEW SALACUSE, MARABOU TOP BY FAB 208.

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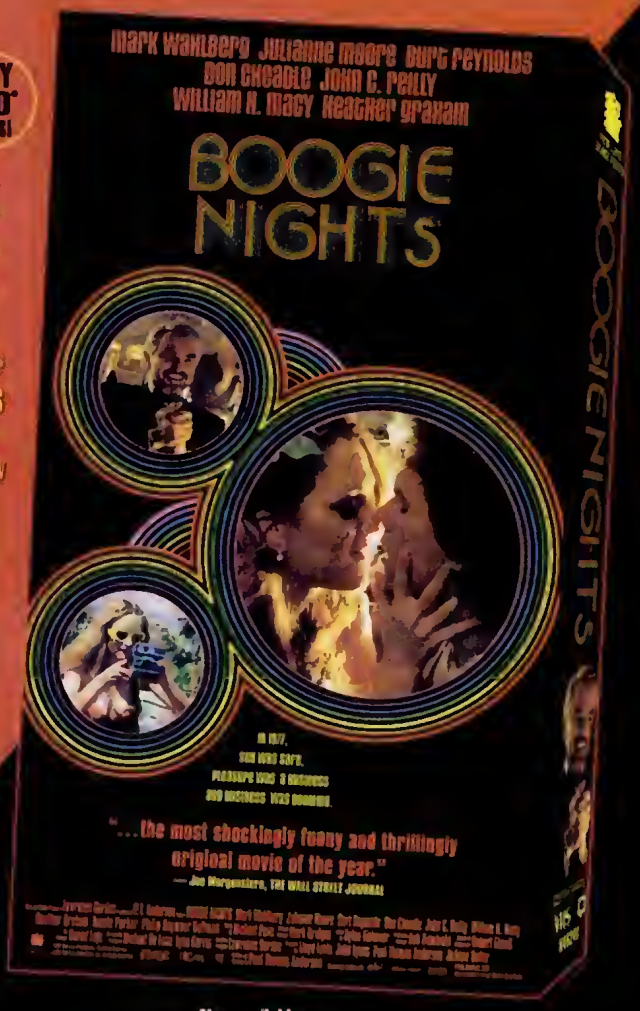
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Let's Wear Two Today

The new marketability of baseball unis

For decades, Major League Baseball had a reputation as a sartorially retarded sport, which translated to less-than-stellar souvenir sales. But these days it's a whole new ball game. "Baseball's really got its marketing act together," says Michael Jacobsen, editor-in-chief of *Sportstyle*, a trade magazine for sporting-goods manufacturers and retailers. Of all the major sports, he says, baseball is growing the fastest in market share, experiencing a strong rebound after the 1994 strike. And this season, the expansion Arizona Diamondbacks and Tampa Bay Devil Rays are out to give baseball basketball-style cachet.

While almost every one of the 30 Major League Baseball teams has altered, overhauled, or augmented their daily uniforms (with, say, Sunday-only jerseys and hats) in an effort to prime merch sales, baseball's new kids on the block have taken uniform merchandising to the next level: The Diamondbacks and the Devil Rays have between them a total of—count 'em—11 different uniforms and seven different caps, all in hot-selling shades and retro styles. And that's not counting helmets.

David A. Greene



Tampa Bay Devil Rays

Alternative logo



A pro team's logo, like its history, is usually sacrosanct; trendy knock-offs are left to gray-market sports-apparel companies. Here, the Rays preemptively corner the secondary market, with an official "unofficial" design.

Blended colors

People like shiny, colorful things. International soccer has known this for years; players sport glittery logos screen-printed on lightweight synthetic jerseys. But baseball unis have to be washed every day, so solid colors and heavy embroidery have to be the norm. The shimmering blend of purple, black, dark blue, light blue, green, and yellow in the Rays' logo is made of a new blend-free thread called "glacier twill."

Arizona Diamondbacks

Vest and T-shirt



A few years ago, the Florida Marlins and Cincinnati Reds introduced snazzy vests that allowed for freer arm movement while recalling the blowsy dami-sleeves of Jackie Robinson's day. As a merchandising concept, the Diamondbacks' retro vests add a whole new dimension to uniform sales.

Helmet logo

Like the Devil Rays, the Diamondbacks have an alternate logo, but it's used only on their purple batting helmets. This means the team switches logos every inning—giving TV time to as many different licensed products as possible.



Purple



The Minnesota Vikings and the Los Angeles Lakers were once the only teams that dared to wear purple; now the Colorado Rockies, the Diamondbacks, and NFL's Baltimore Ravens are cashing in on purple's trendy appeal. The color also plays an important tie-in role in the Diamondbacks' marketing. Jerry Colangelo, the team's owner, also owns the NBA's Phoenix Suns—who wear purple as well.

Both teams

Teal (a.k.a. Devil Ray Green/ Diamondback Turquoise)



Back in 1994, when both teams' uniforms were designed (they've been in stores since 1995), the formerly swishy teal was the hottest color around. The Charlotte Hornets got the ball rolling in 1988, with uniforms fashioned by menswear designer Alexander Julian, who introduced his signature color to the NBA.

Traditional white and gray

One thing baseball has learned over the years is that while cool colors sell, so does tradition; when the Chicago White Sox went back to conservative black-and-white unis in 1991, merch sales went through the roof. White uniforms at home and gray on the road are a must, and pinstripes add an instant aura of history.

Black



It's a fact: Next to Timberland and Hilfiger, hip-hoppers prefer black sports apparel. After some hullabaloo in the early '90s about its appeal among criminal types, black is now the most popular color for alternate uniforms in all professional sports, from the NHL's lowly Tampa Bay Lightning to the NBA's Chicago Bulls. A sure sign the color's reached the saturation point: This year, even the *New York Mets* will wear black.

LARGE PHOTOGRAPH BY ROBERT ROGERS/TAMPA BAY DEVIL RAYS.

Abra Moore

(Singer, songwriter, veteran of van living.)

Air freshener (Bought everyone in the band one of these. Things get pretty rank after 2 days in a van.)

In Waikiki: A shot from my Poi Dog days.

Pablo. I miss him when I'm on the road. (Hope all this touring pays off big.)

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England's Puking

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IN GARY OLDMAN'S FLINTY FILM *NIL BY MOUTH*, his South London lads brood in dismal council flats, shooting smack and beating their wives. Mark curses an antidepressant, a so-called Happy Pill that's stopped up his bodily outputs, only making him more violent. "You couldn't piss, you couldn't shit, you couldn't come!" he cries in disbelief. When Mark's pal Ray gets punched out and vomits blood, the voiding seems almost blissful. Meanwhile, the first thing the main character does in Mark Ravenhill's new off-Broadway play *Shopping and Fucking* is hurl on two friends. He's trying, half-heartedly, to kick heroin. Next, he tongues a rent boy's asshole, only to recoil at the blood in his mouth.

This is the visceral stew that comprises recent British pop culture: drugs, violence, porn, and gushings of shit and vomit. The Angry Pukers have arrived, and they're kicking America's ass. Or licking it, anyway.

Britain has long been less politically correct than we are: Witness *Benny Hill* and *Absolutely Fabulous*. (When Roseanne tried to develop a Stateside *Ab Fab*, the networks wanted massive moral interjections: Don't snort blow at home, kids, or you'll be driving a new Jeep Cherokee through your deviated septum.) But this new toilet humor is no laughing matter. As a pill-popping tough says in Jez Butterworth's play (and forthcoming movie) *Mojo*, taking note of how girls absolutely shit themselves when singer Silver Johnny is onstage, "Anything makes polite young ladies come their cocoa in public is worth taking a look at."

In a world bewilderingly saturated with false products and information, the body is the only reliable guide to how we really feel. The news from Britain is that we're feeling extremely anxious, mostly from all the false products and information. As Radiohead wail in "Paranoid Android," "The dust and the screaming / The yuppies networking / The panic / The vomit / The panic / The vomit." "Nausea," Thom Yorke told *Spin* in January, "was part of what we were trying to create." Private preoccupation with one's fluids and chunky solids is merely morbid; it's when you stop pissing or crapping or vomiting into a toilet and start pissing or crapping or vomiting on your neighbors that things get anarchic.



Ewan McGregor in Trainspotting: nausea as metaphor, man.

TRAINSPOTTING: PHOTOFEST

This all comes as Tony Blair's Labor government is eager to "re-brand" the country by replacing its red telephone boxes and Beefeaters' bearskin hats with the sleek iconography of a 21st-century world marketplace. The merrie olde England of Merchant/Ivory and Hugh Grant's winsome stammerings is certainly dead. But what's superseded it isn't so much Cool Britannia—lithe models voguing in *Wallpaper**—as Liam Gallagher memorably trashing George Harrison as a "dirty old nipple" and a "sweaty old mushroom," and threatening to "hit him with me knob." The culture is turning not outward but inside-outward. British Airways painted over the Union Jack on its tail fins with swirly ethnic motifs—better would have been an air-sick bag.

Class anger is the ruling emetic. Late capitalism is later still in Britain; its lingering class system, in which accent largely determines status and prospects, embitters the gulf between the haves and the have-nots. On Pulp's *Different Class*, Jarvis Cocker snarled, "Take your *Year in Provence* and shove it up your ass," which is pretty funny. But he seemed dead serious when he asserted in "Common People" that the poor have truer, more authentic lives: "You are amazed that they exist and they burn so bright whilst you can only wonder why."

Designer Alexander McQueen cultivated the rumor that, as a tailor to Prince Charles, he'd sewn obscene messages into the lining of Charles's suits. McQueen, whose father was a taxi driver, took over France's Givenchy (around the time plumber's son John Galliano was put in charge of equally swank Dior) and promptly held the first ready-to-wear show in a former slaughterhouse. He seemed to despise the upper-class women who buy fashion. In lieu of a party after the show, he declared—or postured—that he'd "rather people left my shows and vomited." Designer Andrew Groves went McQueen one better: As *New York Times* critic Amy Spindler reported, "When one model tore open a bodice, hundreds of dead flies (well, some were alive) dropped to the floor. The model ran backstage and vomited."

The Angry Pukers are heirs to the Angry Young Men, *A Clockwork Orange*, the Sex Pistols, *Viz* magazine—immensely popular among the soccer toughs for features like "Fat Slags" and "Benny the Boil Sucker"—and Martin Amis. John Self in Amis's classic novel *Money* lives an endless hangover: "For ten minutes I vomited elaborately, with steamhammer convulsions that I had no strength to resist or contain." "It



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straight up





One of Damien Hirst's severed beasts: More recently, he opened a chic restaurant.



Noel Gallagher meets British Prime Minister Tony Blair: Did he wash his hands first?

must be the booze," Self moans crapulously, "it must be the junk, it must be all the pornography." The porn loop in Self's head is explicit and hateful: "Suck and spread, bitch, yeah bounce for me baby."

And indeed, that sort of misogyny is disturbingly casual in this pub culture, with Prodigy flogging "Smack My Bitch Up" and club-kid designer Antonio Berardi making his runway models look battered. It's the men who count—women's sufferings are only an idle consequence. Photographer Richard Billingham's searing book, *Ray's a Laugh*, shows Billingham's alcoholic father, Ray, passed-out beside the flat's broken toilet, or awake but barely conscious of the blood soaking him from some raging offstage catastrophe. Ray is thin with wild blue eyes and the mean look of a tosspot on the way out. His hugely fat wife—Billingham's mom—hunkers in front of the television, resigned to and perhaps secretly pleased by the fleetingness of their time together.

Pondering at all on one's limited vital juices soon leads to intimations of mortality. Last fall's "Sensation" show at the Royal Academy of Arts featured a bust filled with eight pints of a sculptor's own blood; a sculpture of another artist's dead, naked dad; and Damien Hirst's famous "Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living"—a tiger shark floating in formaldehyde. Hirst has also crafted gruesome memento mori involving cows' heads, maggots, and electric bug-zappers, and, determined to shock, suggested popping his dead grandmother into a construction.

All this rudeness boiled over in the exuberantly bleak *Trainspotting*, in which Renton dives into a toilet to recover his shat-out suppository and, when kicking heroin, prepares "one bucket for urine, one for feces, and one for vomitus." "The streets were awash with drugs you can have for unhappiness and pain, and we took them all," he says. "It's shite being Scottish!" the lads complain. "We're the lowest of the low!" Seeing no way up, they say fuck it. Spud shits himself and the feces gets flung around his girlfriend's parents' breakfast nook; Tommy and his girlfriend's private porn video gets out and his mates watch it. The aptly named Sick Boy's baby dies because everyone's shooting skag 'round the clock. Yet Renton doesn't believe in a shaming court of public opinion: "There was no such thing as society, and even if there was I was no part of it." Society is a long con to get you to buy televisions and insurance policies that only enrich those at the top, while your money and teeth dwindle and you're soon enough "rotting away at the end of it all, pissing your last in a miserable home."

But the genius of the movie—and Irvine Welsh's novel—was that it located heroin not just as the ultimate statement of anti-consumerism but, paradoxically, as the ultimate consumer product. Skag encodes both the glamour of rebellion—"Fuck it, we would have injected Vitamin C if only they'd made it illegal"—and the aspirational promise of purchasing a feeling better than "a thousand orgasms."

What the Angry Pukers are discovering, or perhaps knew all along, is that the more shocking the protest against the consumer culture, the more taboo its violations of the body's sanctity, the more fervently it will be swallowed by that same half-nauseated consumer culture. When you watch a 14-year-old kid begging to be anally raped with a knife in *Shopping and Fucking*, declaring it a "transaction" akin to shopping for Ecstasy or a tongue stud, you become uncomfortably aware that by paying $35 to see this play you've bought the ultimate in vomiting by proxy. Where can the playwright go from here?

Just about anywhere, in his new Jeep Cherokee. Ewan McGregor, Renton in *Trainspotting*, is now playing Obi-Wan Kenobi in the *Star Wars* prequel. Jarvis Cocker temporizes wildly about his new status and bygone class cred on Pulp's new album. "Although nothing looks different," he coos wanly, "a revolution took place." Damien Hirst has opened a themed restaurant, The Pharmacy, where mates such as Alexander McQueen chow down near medicine cabinets filled with Prozac and methadone. And Noel Gallagher met with Tony Blair at 10 Downing Street. He was considered a safer invite than Liam; Noel, after all, is the thoughtful one, the one who lyricizes his feelings instead of pouring lager over some prat's head. But Noel didn't let us down. He headed straight for the Queen's private bathroom. "Only me and the Queen have ever shat in that bog, ever," he proudly reported afterward. "Which is great, innit? A big Gallagher turd next to a royal one, floating through the U-bend." A nicely ambiguous moment: awed, surly, and triumphal. The culmination of all this shrewdly marketed fury is taking a dump the Queen might see. ●



Alexander McQueen with models: He'd rather people "left [his] shows and vomited."

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STEVE ERICKSON MOVIES

Wang 1, Cube 0

The first great film of the 21st century, the first bad film from a hip-hop legend, and no more films from Jack Nicholson (please)





WAYNE WANG'S NEW MOVIE, *Chinese Box*, FEELS SO much on the edge of the present that it couldn't have existed five minutes ago, let alone five months or five years ago. Only in part is this because of its subject matter—the transfer of Hong Kong from the British Empire to the Communist Chinese. More than that, the film captures something in the air, not only in the Asian air but in ours, too: a breakdown. Jeremy Irons plays an English photojournalist dying along with the century, and as he dies he's overwhelmed by all his failures, including his failure to make the woman he loves (Gong Li) love him back, as though this is the sort of thing that's ever in anyone's control. He's finding out, in his last days, about all the things that are always out of anyone's control.

Last year, in Tokyo for the first time and properly stunned by it, I remarked to some friends who live there that maybe L.A. isn't the *Blade Runner* city after all, that in fact Tokyo is. To which they answered, "No, actually, Hong Kong is." There are sequences in *Chinese Box* that remind me of *Blade Runner*, even though it isn't a science-fiction movie, even though everything in it is rooted in reality. Like *Blade Runner*, *Chinese Box* depicts a collision of sensibilities and information, the wild juxtapositions of future and past, the way all meaning feels up for grabs. Irons is busy in Hong Kong videotaping what he calls the "Pompeii Tapes," recording the last days before the lava of time overflows the crater of history. In this sense, *Chinese Box* is a millennial movie the way *Blade Runner* is, the way Wim Wenders's *Until the End of the World* is, the way David Lynch's *Lost Highway* is, the latest film to almost unconsciously capture the way reality seems headed down the drain of December 31, 1999. Its Hong Kong streets are constant chaos—screaming sirens and people running frantically for no apparent reason, clinging desperately not to economics or ideology but to love and sex and possession and belonging. *Chinese Box* is the best film yet from Wang (*Chan Is Missing*, *The Joy Luck Club*), and its hour and 45 minutes feel epic—a hole blown through the screen of our times.

IF CHUCK D IS THE JOHN LENNON OF HIP-HOP, ICE CUBE IS its Johnny Rotten, so Ice Cube writing and directing *The Players Club* is a little like Johnny Rotten writing and directing *Showgirls*. *The Players Club* doesn't even have the conviction of punk nihilism, let alone rap rage; like *Showgirls*, it claims to be a cautionary tale about a girl dancing in a strip joint ("Make the money," she keeps insisting, "don't let the money make you"), but it's just an excuse for Ice Cube to surround himself with as many half-naked females as possible. In scabrous, rancid masterworks such as *Straight Outta Compton*, *AmeriKKKa's Most Wanted*, and *Death Certificate*, Ice Cube's violent musical rants about women, cops, and white people ranged from brilliant to repellent, but you never doubted their basic integrity. In comparison, *The Players Club* is shockingly sanitized and bloodless; except for a rape scene at a bachelor party, the violence is played mostly for laughs.

The spirit of the film has less in common with N.W.A than with 2 Live Crew, who actually make an appearance halfway through just so they can leer at the strippers and so that Ice Cube—in a very small role, despite his top billing—can indulge the vicarious whim of busting their heads. The humor is sophomoric when it isn't obnoxious (jokes about the strip club smelling like a fish and chips restaurant), but there are a few genuinely funny, outrageous moments: a private party of white cops begging to be paddled by the black girls; flashing green lights (the color of money) in the girls' dressing room announcing new customers; and Bernie Mac's unhinged, original performance as the club owner. As for the climactic catfight between the heroine and a lesbian in a blond wig, we can only dream what it might have been in the hands of a master like Russ Meyer.

IS IT TOO SOON—OR MAYBE TOO LATE—AFTER ALL THE recent Oscar hoopla surrounding *As Good as It Gets*, to point out what many know but would just as soon not say: Jack Nicholson is the most overrated actor in American film. This has been true almost since he won his first Acade-

Short Subjects

Screen

The Spanish Prisoner



Directed by David Mamet

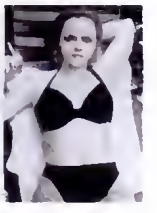
And now for his next trick, David Mamet will tear seppy lines of dialogue from two dozen grade-Z film-noir double-agent thrillers, roll them into a ball, swallow them, and smile. *The Spanish Prisoner*'s arch screenplay—an elaborate con, the goal of which is to secure possession of "the process," a '90s Wall Street equivalent of the '50s Cold War film's "secret formula"—distills plot to bare bones, to pure form, and marks the triumph of the cliché, delivered in Mamet's deadpan just-stand-there-and-say-the-line-as-clearly-as-possible-and-leave-the-magic-to-me signature style. It's Mamet's most gripping, paranoid, laugh-out-loud script since his first, *House of Games*. Too bad, then, that 1) lumpish Campbell Scott, a poor man's Harrison Ford, can't generate much sympathy as the naive boy-mathematician out of whom everyone wants to suck the process. And, bigger deal, 2) the movie looks like *Starsky & Hutch*. Part of the genius of *House of Games*—another classic movie about the big con, with a phenomenal, almost alien, Lindsay Crouse performance at its center—was Mamet's reflection of his laconic, deadpan lines in simple, static images. Now he has cranes and dollies. But no visual rhythm. **Bob Davis**

Sonatine

Directed by Takeshi Kitano

Actor/writer/director/media icon Takeshi Kitano's perfectly paced, Ravelian day-dream is a light, whimsical...yakuza film. In this 1993 film, Kitano plays a stone-faced underlord who holes up in a seaside cottage with a pair of fledgling protégés while strategizing with respect to an internecine-gang-war-related plot that is largely irrelevant but allows for the occasional eruption of gunplay. The neophyte killers play with dolls, frolic on the beach, and spew Roman candles at one another while the boss observes their youthful enthusiasms with nostalgia. It all has the quiet eroticism of a Mishima exercise video. In the end, the boss is offered a truce if his group disbands. Obviously out of the question. The performances are still, plastic; the compositions flat, plastic. Almost no movement. Quiet. Thoughtful. A subtle masterpiece. **B.D.**

The Opposite of Sex



Directed by Don Roos

You get the joke early in Don Roos's in-your-face sex comedy *The Opposite of Sex* when bratty protagonist Dedee (Christina Ricci) warns, in a hip, colloquial voice-over, that she isn't "going to grow a heart of gold" and "there's people a lot nicer coming up—we call them losers." And it's a relief to be in a movie that isn't going to take itself too seriously. But by the time each of Roos's slightly-too-familiar caricatures—the gay schoolteacher; the sexless bitch; and the

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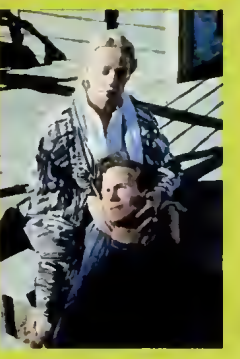
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my Award for *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, in which he gives his definitive interpretation of Crazy Jack, the ultimate rebel lit by a deranged gusto the system can't repress. Ever since, from *The Shining* to *Batman*, we've fallen into an endless swoon over a shameless exhibitionism (as opposed to real acting) that just seems to rake in ever more awards and adoration.

This isn't to dismiss Nicholson. In the early '70s, in films like *Chinatown*, he was often superb, and even in the '80s, after he had already begun cashing in on his shtick, he did fine, careful work in *Reds* and *The Border*. Surprisingly, his best performance this decade—implosive, intelligent, mesmerizing—was in *Wolf*, a role one would have thought made-to-order for Nicholson's worst impulses. But these have been exceptions, and the critical fix has been in for Nicholson since *Prizzi's Honor* ten years ago, in which he was so widely praised and shockingly bad that the only thing Hollywood could do was almost throw yet another Oscar at him. (At the last minute they threw it at William Hurt for *Kiss of the Spider Woman* instead.)

If you've seen *As Good as It Gets* with something approaching a clear mind, you know Jack is what's wrong with the picture. Did you really believe his character for a moment? Has any screen couple ever had less chemistry then Nicholson and Helen Hunt? It's not all Nicholson's fault; he plays a badly written part, the kind of paint-by-numbers portrait of neuroses and bigotry and cranky behavior American film studios consider brilliant writing these days. There are times when, to his credit, Nicholson almost sells the character by sheer force of his own personality. But let's acknowledge that, from the very beginning, there's been something dishonest about Nicholson, whose so-called rebellion has always been at the expense of squares and little people oppressed by the system (pimply civil clerks, weary waitresses) rather than those who run it. It would be nice to think Hollywood and the public won't give him another two or three Oscars before they figure this out. ●

Wim and Vigor



FLAWED AND problematic, Wim Wenders's *Until the End of the World* is a travelogue of the millennial subconscious, part science-fiction and part noir and part roed movie. Panned in 1991, todey it cries out for reconsideration. There's actually a six-hour version, but for the time being we have to settle for two-and-a-half hours on video, which may be enough.... Having nostalgically excaveted the early deys of exploitation films and proto-porn in his 1996 book *Grindhouse* (written with Daniel Faris), Eddie Muller now prowls the streets of *Dark City: The Lost World of Film Noir* (St. Martin's Griffin), an amalgamation of noir narretive, movie reviews, and film's shadow history. Along with Lawrence Bassoff's recently self-published *Crime Scenes*, a spectacular color collection of '40s film posters, *Dark City* is for those who want to live in a noir world, or maybe think they already do. **S.E.**

BOOKS

Schlock Treatment

Sex! Violence! Dead animals! Yawn. The problem with transgressive fiction. By Charles Taylor

IF THE TERM "TRANSGRESSIVE fiction" seems more like a designer label than a literary genre, perhaps that's as it should be. The phrase first came into use to describe Bret Easton Ellis's *American Psycho*, a novel of Armani suits and first dates that end in target practice with a nail gun. Transgressive soon became the tag used to describe the work of any novelist (especially young ones) that contained gobs of graphic violence and gobs of raw, deviant sex and blasé disaffectedness combined with an almost adolescent need to shock.

When the heroine of Susanne Moore's *In the Cut* bleeds to death after having her nipple cut off, or a young boy fist-fucks his mother in A.M. Homes's *The End of Alice*, it sure is revolting, but it's not particularly disturbing. For the most part, the people in these books are blank, negative, numbed out—characters who, in sensibility or station, are on the hipster fringe. The bleak urban landscapes they live in are like a persistent low-grade headache. You get the feeling that a drug overdose or a bout of S&M or an unexpected encounter with the serial killer down the hall isn't really going to make much difference in their lives.

Although Mary Gaitskill has often been thrown in with the transgressives, there isn't a story in her last collection, *Because They Wanted To*, that doesn't feel like the product of authentic experience or observation. Gaitskill makes us feel close to people whose lives may seem distant from



callous, world-weary 16-year-old—have explored their sexuality and learned tidy lessons in love, you could pretty much care less. Though the script owes something to *Heathers*, Roos's post-PC-dialogue-as-social-commentary (he offers offensive anti-gay epithets alongside preachy pro-gay speeches) is, despite mostly good acting, the movie's weakest element.

Deirdre Dolan

Print

About a Boy

by Nick Hornby
(Riverhead Books)

About a Boy—a novel drafted in alt-rock ink—alternates chapters between 36-year-old Will and 12-year-old Marcus, each disaffected, each closer to half a person. (In fact, they're both halves of Rob, the childish, thirtysomething music geek from Hornby's *High Fidelity*.) With such a split, Hornby invokes the two ever-flowing streams of middle-class sentimentality: the After School Special and the *New Yorker* story. But the torrents don't carry him away—at least until the end—and we're grateful for the noble fight against poignancy, as Will and Marcus shimmy awkwardly toward the adult world of families and responsibility, bittersweet wisdom, etc. Hornby is closer to brilliant when considering the kid, which explains both the title and the dominant mode of nostalgia: for childhood and punky girls, for nuclear families and the early Clash, and even, finally, for Kurt Cobain's suicide, which plays throughout the novel just like Musak.



Joshua Clover

Defiance

by Carole Maso
(Dutton)

Indie angel Carole Maso goes major label, but sticks to her favorite form: an isolated woman's memory play in the moments before the mind's obsolescence. *Defiance* takes the form of a "death book" kept by math-maddened Bernadette O'Brien. It's her fugued-up self-annotation while awaiting an appointment with the electric chair, having snuffed two of her Harvard students in a premeditated, postcoital manner. Maso encodes hi-test feminist theory in her pomosexual plot, but she never sells out the beauty of her sentences to either. Dark-side aesthetic washes over you in waves, mixing wild pleasure and brutal fury like a certain kind of transcendent fuck.



J.C.

Times Two Intro

by Michael Stipe
(Ray gun/Little, Brown)

In reverse of *Defiance*, Michael Stipe's photo-journal of Patti Smith's celebrated return to touring promises a woman coming *out* of mortal isolation. Though it's a *Ray gun* design, it has an *Interview* feel: famous people looking at other famous people and—surprise!—at themselves. Like Ginsberg's snapshot chronicles of his



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Nothing's shocking: Dale Peck (above) goes Gothic in his latest.

ours: a baby-sitter who has to walk out on kids abandoned by their mother, even a man who confesses a rape to his airplane seatmate. The transgressives, by adopting the mantle of the artist who is unconcerned with, even contemptuous of, what the mainstream reading public is willing to accept, playact at confronting us with our fears. It's not much different from the pose hard-boiled writers have struck for decades, insisting that the dirty rotten corruption they rub our noses in is what life is all about, and that those of us who won't accept it are just a bunch of pantywaists. But let's be honest: Aren't our dark sides reflected more in the sort of everyday betrayals Gaitskill writes about than in tales of serial killers or child molesters? It's no fun to read, as in *American Psycho*, about a woman skinned alive with steak knives, or a homeless man and his dog stabbed to death (what could be more transgressive than killing an animal?), but there's no reason to take it more seriously than a kid in a Marilyn Manson T-shirt.

What the transgressives do isn't much different from the pose hard-boiled writers have struck for decades

Maybe the need to include lethal doses of sex and violence is why so many newly minted transgressives wind up writing thrillers. And it may be why an air of playacting hangs over Dale Peck's new novel, *Now It's Time to Say Goodbye* (Farrar, Straus & Giroux), as well as *The Second Suspect* (Nan A. Talese/Doubleday) by Heather Lewis, whose debut, *House Rules*, was certainly the best novel ever about lesbian fisting on the horse-show circuit. In *The Second Suspect*, a young prostitute is killed in the course of servicing the Santerres, a wealthy couple with a kinky sexual appetite. The wife panics and calls 911, and the couple is taken into custody while the husband is carrying a golf bag with the hooker's corpse inside. He claims his wife is the killer and that he was merely trying to cover for her. Since he's got all sorts of connections, it's not long before City Hall is breathing down the neck of the cops, and the near-catatonic wife is left to take the fall.

Not a bad setup for a thriller. Unfortunately, Lewis's grisly touches—the hooker's corpse spilling out of the bag on an interrogation room table, the swath of skin cut from another's abdomen—feel trumped up, and so does the story. The heroine is police detective Caroline Reese, her own career (as we find out) a result of the machinations of the men who hold power over her. She doesn't believe the wife is guilty, and sets out to prove it. And it's here that the whole enterprise leaves credibility behind. "Santerre sat there, calmly, surrounded by men of various descriptions.... He smiled at her, acknowledged her presence, saying, 'Ah, we have a lady among us.' Reese steeled herself against his gaze.... She would not play this game in which her colleagues seemed already enmeshed and enthralled." Lewis wants us to buy that Reese's male colleagues would naturally side with Santerre. But think about the class resentment that most cops, making lousy pay in an impossible job, carry around with them. Why would they side with a rich suspect who uses his connections to pressure them to back off?

The Second Suspect does its damnedest to come off as frank and tough, without a clue that mainstream pop culture is way ahead of it. A few years back, *Prime Suspect* showed the suspicion women cops face from their colleagues. And every week on *Law & Order*, *The Practice*, and *NYPD Blue*, women are shown in roles from detective to judge to lawyer, and it's accepted as a matter of course.

If *The Second Suspect* is embarrassing, Dale Peck's *Now It's Time to Say Goodbye* just feels embarrassed. Whew, boy, it's gross—fingertips sent through the mail, handless arms cauterized with hot tar. But it's too aestheticized to work as pulpy shock, and too self-conscious to carry any real horror. And once you get past the book's ostensible setup—blocked gay novelist takes his young hustler lover to small-town Kansas to escape the constant AIDS deaths of friends in New York—there's an awfully conventional plot: the secret sins and simmering violence of a small town.

Kansas wasn't in the South last time I checked, but it may as well be the way Peck writes about it. He's a Kansas native, but his setting, a small town named Galatea, comes off as one of those Northern fantasies of a hick manure pile replete with a hard-and-fast racial divide, a past lynching, and an oddball outsider who's a cross between Boo Radley and Kevin Spacey's evil genius in *Seven*. It's bone-dry Gothic, and it only gets more grotesque when the local beauty queen is kidnapped and—*quel surprise*—the newcomers find themselves under the glare of suspicion.

There's more than a touch of tourist arrogance in *Now It's Time to Say Goodbye*. Peck's scions of depravity aren't the new archetypes of serial killers and murderous pedophiles but the old ones of ignorant small-town minds. What marks it as transgressive instead of just a third-rate Faulkner is its completely inauthentic take on evil. There's a lot more denial in the transgressives themselves than in the readers who fail to embrace them. Their portraits of darkness are suspiciously cushy fantasies, a chance to come to the literary costume party as raw, uncompromising artists. If nobody wants to dance with them, that only makes the fantasy more complete. ●

Beat buddies, it throws up a democra-punk vibe without ever questioning how cool everybody is. Still, Patti's image burns into pictures with weird radioactive mystery, and Thurston Moore's all-too-brief note reminds you he's a far better writer than singer. More of each, please. **J.C.**

Digital

Blade Runner CD-ROM



(Westwood Studios)
Saw the flick. Bought the director's cut. Read the Phillip K. Dick story. Now it's time to suss out the humans from the humanoids in this sprawling game of Duck, Duck, Replicant. While it isn't nearly as compelling as Ridley Scott's wide-screen gem, this interactive noir-mare does capture the film's cybernetic paranoia, right down to the digitally rendered versions of the original sets.
David Kushner



Online Guitar Archive

(http://www.olga.net)
He's the bane of apartment dwellers everywhere: the roommate who sits on the couch all night trying to figure out the opening lick of "Black Hole Sun." Two solutions: slow poisoning or the Olga Web site. The biggest online resource for guitar/bass chords and notation, Olga sports a constantly evolving database of more than 26,000 songs, and Mr. Roommate should be able to find any tune with the site's new search engine. Now if only someone would delete "Smoke on the Water" once and for all. **D.K.**



Resident Evil 2

(Sony PlayStation)
Like Night of the Living Quake, the object of this gruesome sequel to the first PlayStation hit is blissfully simple: Blow the lungs from the undead, then run. The game has glorious details for a shoot-'em-up—flesh drips, ceiling fans whoosh—and the choice of characters includes über-heroine Claire Redfield. She's no Lara Croft, but then who is? **D.K.**

Game Girlz

(http://www.gamegirlz.com)
Launched by Aurora, cofounder of the femme Quake gaming clan, PMS, this is the Net's premier clubhouse for phaser-toting geek grrrls. Shoot the bits with other players or peruse daily articles like "Females and Computer Games: Do Game Companies See a Market?" With $64 million–worth of so-called girl games sold last year, survey says: most definitely. **D.K.**



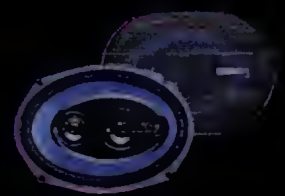


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MTV's *12 Angry Viewers* put the "dis" back in discussion



The star chamber: scenes from 12 Angry Viewers.

There was a moment on *12 Angry Viewers* not too long ago that was about as blissfully negative as you could ever hope to see on MTV. The twentysomething jury had just finished watching Mase's "What You Want" video, and the rapper's mush-mouth MC "skills" were being painfully dissected. "I give Toto and the hoochies props, but Mase—what is that?" one kid barked. "A *mental disorder?*" Thwack!—a sucker punch to the current crown prince (his partner Puff Daddy being king) of the network, and a simple, if a bit cheap, thrill. Such is the appeal of what is perhaps MTV's most effective half-hour.

A Benetton ad–like set of "average" MTV viewers take over the program each week. Monday through Thursday, they view three new videos, then rate them on a scale of one to five. The highest-rated video of the day becomes a finalist on the Friday show, when the jurors pick which favorite will go into heavy rotation for the following week (generally 15 to 20 airings). The conceit—regular people just-like-you! control content—is as old as the hills (or at least The Box), but MTV gives it their trademark self-reflexive spin: The faces of the jurors remain on-screen in a small box as the videos play, revealing, for instance, the disdain on a Brooklyn homeboy's face as he watches a trippy Cure clip. Basically, you're watching other people watch videos.

Still, it's the only programming on MTV on which you can hope to hear *any* criticism of major artists and their videos. "We want to be able to express opinions, have some editorial courage," says MTV's Bob Kusbit, one of the show's creators. Actually, the network keeps its own hands pretty clean. Host Ananda Lewis does her best to play the peacemaking den mother, letting the jurors do most of the talking. None of these kids are likely to put Greil Marcus out of a job, but their uncrit-like musings are refreshingly honest, ranging from a terse "That sucked" to such advanced disses as "I thought it was some German perfume commercial."

Since the program's September launch, *12 Angry Viewers* has become one of the most talked-about shows on the network, earning a respectable average .5 Nielsen "coverage area" rating for its 6 P.M. time slot (compared to 1.6 for the prime-time hit *Road Rules*). And it's been credited with breaking such "new" artists as Jason Nevins ("It's Like That" remix) and Aphex Twin ("Come to Daddy"). (Rap and electronica tend to fare especially well with the hipster jurors.) "If you get a good score, it definitely grabs people's attention," says Liz Morentin of A&M Records, whose up-and-coming rockers Fretblanket have been promoting themselves as "Approved by *12 Angry Viewers*" based on the high rating for the "Into the Ocean" video. Says MTV's Kusbit, "Labels are begging us to get their videos on."

"Finding 12 decent new ones a week is actually hard," says MTV's Lewis Largent, who selects the program's videos. "Sometimes we'll throw in one that's really bad just to see what the kids will say about it. We do try to be objective and blend styles, though, so we don't have three clips of the same genre."

Like VH1's *Pop-Up Video*, *12 Angry Viewers* offers MTV a savvy new way to titillate both its audience and its advertisers. After fielding several years of complaints that there was little music on MTV anymore, the network launched a "recommitment to music" campaign. But long blocks of videos equal low ratings, as viewers are inclined to channel surf whenever a band they don't like comes on. Advertisers prefer narrative programming designed to hold the audience's attention for 30 to 60 minutes. By combining videos with the suspense of competition and the veneer of audience "interactivity," *12 Angry Viewers* fills the bill.

Of course, the show is not without its contrivances. Winning videos often disappear from the playlist, and losing videos often end up in heavy rotation. "MTV is going to add or drop what it wants to, no matter what," says one skeptical label executive. But there's still that thrill of striking a little fear in the music industry. "There's a definite downside risk to the show," says one major-label A&R rep: "Your band could get torn apart by some bitter kid."

Zev Borow

HUSH HUSH

The monthly dish on the music biz

Having caught a whiff of more than $13 billion in per-annum billing, and with a deep, abiding concern for artistry, Wall Street has set its sights on the music industry in its pursuit of intellectual property. The first such foray into the biz was February 1997's **David Bowie** bond, which paid the Man Who Fell to Earth (and Landed in a Shitload of Capital) $55 million against the revenue stream from his first 25 albums. With the gauntlet down, new investment groups are hanging up shingles—the most formidable being legendary **Eagles** manager and Giant/Revolution Records owner **Irving Azoff**, who recently partnered with Nomura Entertainment Finance, and former EMI Records America Chairman/CEO **Charles Koppelman**, who got his piece of the rock off Prudential. Here's how the new game is played: 1) An industry insider identifies an entity that looks like it will generate long-term major cake from recording royalties, publishing, and ancillary uses (such as TV, song performance fees, etc.); 2) after valuation, said entity gets paid in advance for its royalties over a specified period of time; 3) the investment company then converts its investment into bonds in large denominations, which will be purchased by other investment groups with major cake. Expect the competition for the few most coveted investment targets to be less than polite, considering the megabucks involved. Oh, did I mention that longtime rivals Azoff and Koppelman have a less than beautiful friendship? Let the games begin.



David Bowie



Irving Azoff

Just four years after nixing its joint-venture deal with **Rob Kahane**'s Trauma Records—home to a little, unknown English band called **Bush**—Disney, under the leadership of new music chief **Bob Cavallo**, is bidding to get back in business with Kahane and Trauma. Oddly enough, at about the same time Kahane got the boot, then–music division kingpin **Bob Pfeiffer** also curbed a label deal with then–artist manager Cavallo, who had a young Canadian singer/songwriter named

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: COURTESY MTV; DAVID ALLEN/CORBIS; CRAIG SKINNER/GLOBE PHOTOS.



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Maggot Brains

The bizarre premiere of *Kurt and Courtney*

It was one maggot on top of another," said a "Nirvana obsessive" who had just attended the February premiere of *Kurt and Courtney*, British director **Nick Broomfield**'s controversial conspiracy-spinning documentary about the death of **Kurt Cobain**. The speaker was referring as much to the impossibly absurd scene outside San Francisco's tiny, independently owned Roxie Cinema as to the film, which trots out a motley procession of ex-associates, some of whom imply Cobain may have been murdered—and that **Courtney Love** has something to hide.

The night before the premiere, Love's lawyers faxed the Roxie e letter that threatened legal ection if the "defamatory" movie was screened. "We considered it a free speech issue," said Roxie owner Bill Banning. (The letter was retrected several days later.) You'll recall that *Kurt and Courtney* was banned from January's Sundance Film Festival after Love's lawyers complained about the unlicensed use of live recordings by Nirvana and Hole, since excised. "This is all a continuation of what the film is really about," Broomfield said, citing Love's alleged attempts to squash his "journalistic freedom." Love's press agents declined comment.

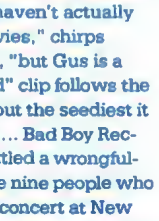
After the screening, a large crowd filled the street outside the theater, playing spot-the-sublebrity with some of the film's prime characters, including Nirvana photographer Alice Wheeler and Love's estranged (and notoriously unhinged) father, Hank Harrison, who appears in the movie hawking his self-published anti-Courtney screed, *Who Killed Kurt Cobain?*

"Courtney was disrespecting me and chumping me, man," Harrison said to the assembled. "And I refuse to be chumped." But despite the crowd's giddy sense that they'd just witnessed something forbidden, many ticket holders felt chumped by the director. Said one unsatisfied customer, "It would've been good if he found even *one* credible person to interview." **James Sullivan**



Hanson

Hanson raised eyebrows when the golden boys hired film director **Gus Van Sant** to direct their new video, "Weird." Some postpubescents might remember Van Sant's pre–*Good Will Hunting* career: Films such as *My Own Private Idaho* were grimy homages to drug abuse and teenege hustlers. "We haven't actually seen those movies," chirps **Taylor** Hanson, "but Gus is a really hip director right now." The "Weird" clip follows the lads on a subwey ride in New York City, but the seediest it gets is a pair of smooching punk rockers.... Bad Boy Records mogul **Sean "Puffy" Combs** has settled a wrongful-death suit with the families of eight of the nine people who were crushed to deeth at e 1991 hip-hop concert at New York's City College. Copromoter Combs was charged with negligence for failing to provide adequate security et "The 1st Annual Heavy D & Puff Daddy Celebrity Basketball Game." Combs has vehemently fought the charges, but he must now fork over $600,000. The parents of one victim have refused to accept the settlement, which mey land Combs in court this spring.... Are Chicago's **Veruca Salt** finished? Singer **Nina Gordon** left the band—cofounded with **Louise Post** in 1991—amid rumors of heavy feuding between the two former best friends. Trouble began after their big-budget Outpost debut, *Eight Arms to Hold You*, failed to seethe. Both women are reportedly considering solo albums. **Julia Chaplin**



Veruca Salt

Rhyming and Stealing

Guerrilla samplers target Beck

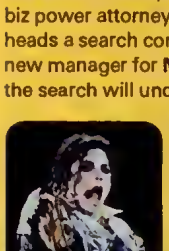
Beck may make music for people with a thrift-shop state of mind, but he himself was unwittingly "recycled" by e gang of self-proclaimed "art terrorists." **Illegal Art**, e collective of hackers-cum-DJs, unlawfully sampled and remixed Beck's own sample-heavy music for a drum'n'bass compilation called *Deconstructing Beck*. "Beck and other major-label artists have the money to pay for the samples they use on their records and we don't," says Illegal Art's mouthpiece, who goes by the alias "Philo T. Farnworth." "It's our intention to tear down the hierarchy—sample access for all!"

Illegal Art is underwritten by ®™ark, a secretive organization that funds culture-jamming and corporate sabotage stunts. Other ®™ark-sponsored projects include the Barbie Liberation Front, which protested sexist toys by replacing the voice boxes of 300 Talking Barbies with those of G.I. Joe. While Farnworth seys thet Illegal Art is fighting "corporate greed," the activists apparently aren't opposed to making a capitalist profit: They've been selling *Deconstructing Beck* over the Internet for $5 a pop.

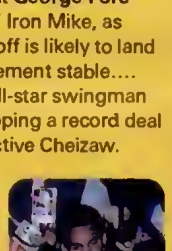
At press time, Beck hadn't decided whether he would file suit, says his lawyer, Brian McPherson. But Universal—which owns Beck's label, Geffen Records, and most of the master tapes in question—sent a cease and desist order in February. "Beck is pretty protective and proud of his work," says McPherson. "And the CD sounds like bad jungle with his music in it." **J.C.**

HUSH HUSH *(cont. from p. 76)*

Alanis Morissette signed to his Third Reil company. Had Cavallo not been temporarily between labels, Disney music fortunes might not have become the benchmark for industry futility.... Speaking of label deals, omnipresent producers the **Dust Brothers** (a.k.a. **Mike Simpson** and **John King**) recently hitched their Nickelbag imprint to Mammoth Records (which recently hitched with —you guessed it—Disney). In addition to releases from obscuro Nickelbaggers **Sukia** and **10 ¢**, the Dusties say to expect the soundtrack to *South Park* creators **Matt Stone** and **Trey Parker**'s *Orgazmo* flick and a tentatively titled *Dust Brothers' Greatest Hits* featuring previously unreleased mixes and selections from their ample body of work.... The bidding war for the soundtrack rights to yuppie culturel icon *Ally McBeal* soared into the $3 million range as labels banked on the notion that 25-to-54-year-olds will plunk down their Gold Cards for an aural keepsake. Sony 550 Music, helmed by **Polly Anthony** (who also runs Epic Records), scored a resounding victory in by far the most competitive battle of the year.... After music biz power attorney **John Branca** heads a search committee to locate a new manager for **Michael Jackson**, the search will undoubtedly turn to locating the King of Pop's throne—last seen in the joint custody of **Celine Dion** and **Mariah Carey**. Meanwhile, Branca has taken over legal duties for toothy former heavyweight champ **Mike Tyson** as the boxer tries to extricate himself from the clinch of walking hair-don't **Don King**. The aforementioned Azoff (who also reps geriatric heavyweight **George Foreman**) is "consulting" Iron Mike, as rumors swirl that Azoff is likely to land Tyson for his management stable.... Finally, L.A. Lakers all-star swingman **Kobe Bryant** is shopping a record deal for his hip-hop collective Cheizaw. Record weasels everywhere are salivating that Kobe's the real deal—unlike, say, other, taller rappers who would be better off punting at the free-throw line. **Joe Fleischer**



Michael Jackson



Kobe Bryant

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: JEFF DAVY/RETNA, YOURI LENQUETTE/RETNA, GUY ARCH/RETNA, NIELS VAN IPEREN/RETNA, JOHN BARRETT/GLOBE PHOTOS

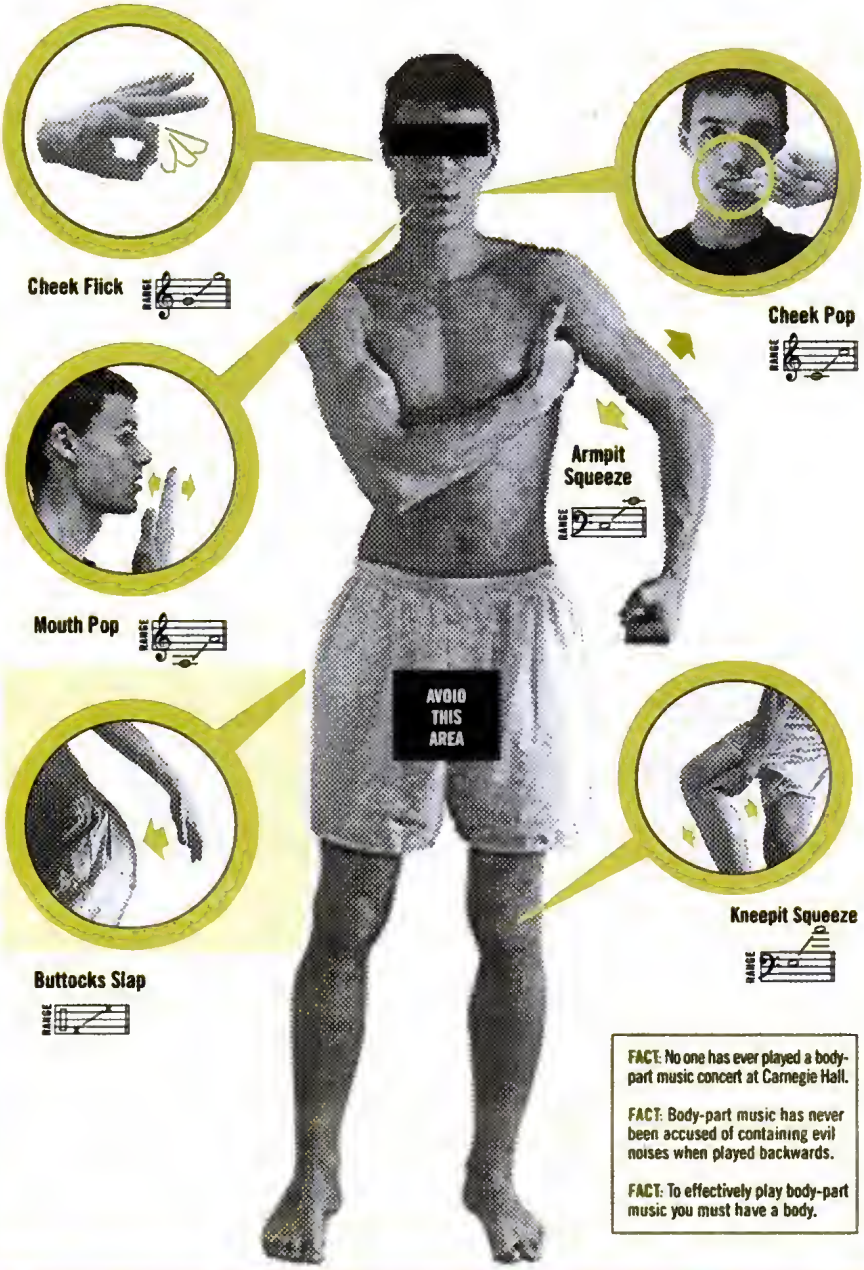

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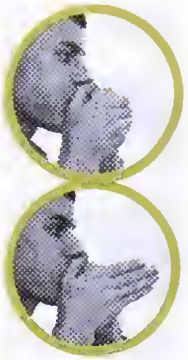


FACT: No one has ever played a body-part music concert at Carnegie Hall.

FACT: Body-part music has never been accused of containing evil noises when played backwards.

FACT: To effectively play body-part music you must have a body.

DETAIL



HAND WHISTLE

To reach a variety of notes, cup your hands together to create a hollow cavity, like when catching a grasshopper (for those who've only tortured and squished grasshoppers, this will take getting used to). Then blow across the opening made by your thumbs. To vary the pitch, open and close your fingers.

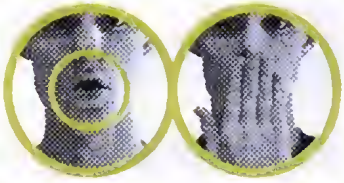


HEAD KNOCK

Use a clenched fist or open palm to produce this sound. Just beware, rapping the top of your noggin can be painful. Of course, the truly great artists always suffer for their art.

MOUTH POP

Popping your mouth creates a great musical sound. But one word of warning: avoid this when really jamming. A single overzealous strike can hurt like the dickens, and often leads to blistering.



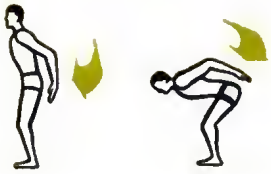


ARMPIT SQUEEZE

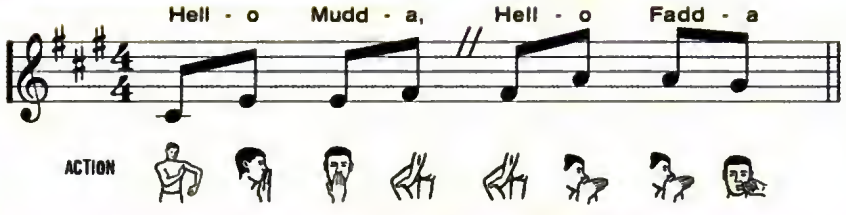
To most, a hand in the armpit is nothing more than the whoopee cushion of human anatomy. To a body musician, however, it's a finely-tuned instrument. Just make sure your palm is facing toward the pit and your hand is slightly cupped. This will ensure that you're able to achieve maximum sonic quality.

BUTTOCKS SLAP

The buttocks can produce different pitches depending on your body's position. When upright, a firm strike creates a low tone. Bending over tightens the skin and muscles, therefore creating a somewhat higher pitch.



Now you're ready to play



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DISCLAIMER - People mock what they don't understand. Geniuses throughout history have been forced to endure the artistic ignorance of fools. As a body musician you may also face this problem. People might be inclined to heave mushy rotten tomatoes at your head. Be warned.

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The Spin Top 40 The most vital artists in music today



1
Beck

What's the new pollution? Human radios, sex with machines, and mad eunuchs, says *Spin*'s Number One Funky Robot

Believe the (four-year-old) hype: Beck is cover-laaping, poll-sweeping, chart-hopping, Grammy-copping proof that you can be weird, cool, brainy, and popular, all at the same time. Clutching both his eccentricities *and* his Gold records to his skinny little chest, he's the high-school oddball's ultimate fantasy. Collaga-radio genius? Pomo rocker? No matter, he's living like a hitman. Some days it seems like all of Cool World orbits around Beck Hansen. And he's dishing up the cosmic slop like a one-man funkadalica, a starchild in the promised land who can't always keep pace with his own imagination. So how does he name his game? "If you put a telephone gun to my head?" he asked during a recent interview. "Pop music." If so, it's the New Pop, with the DNA of the avant-gardist and the song'n'dance man inextricably intertwined. But comparisons pale: Beck is a house party unto himself. Hara he is in ten aasy lessons.

1. Though he's blond and cute, Beck is not the long-lost fourth Hanson brother Beck: "I ain't riding around in the seat of that Hansonmobile. I'm not even in the sidecar. I'm in the tow truck."

2 He invents the songs, then they invent their own Beck "My stage persona's definitely not as fabricated or realized as David Bowie's is; it's intuitive and it evolves every night. I'm just trying to connect with the in-laws. It used to be easier when I played by myself—with a band, you have to kick up a little more of a commotion."

3 Kicking up a commotion sometimes involves sparkly suits and shameless falsetto "Tha song 'I Wanna Git With You (And Possibly Your Sister If She's Available)' was recorded for *Odelay*, but I didn't include it because I didn't want peopla to take it as a parody. I'm waiting for someone else to cover it."

4. Once he chooses a direction. the character of the moment takes over and ndes it home "R&B falsattos will be prevalent on the next record. I've been making the eunuch scene recently—there's some *mad* eunuchs out here. Big-ups to all the eunuchs on the West Coast!"

5. Yep, there will be a next record... "We'll see where it goes. I do a lot of tha production myself; differant people come in and engineer for me. I have a coupla of things sitting around with the Dust Brothers that need a ribbon put on them."

6 ...and it apparantly will involve food Food and medical procedures "It's my rock'n'roll confection machine, cooking up truffles and scones for ya, baby. I love you all with tender forceps. Performing surgary 23 hours a day!"

7 But there will never be e film called *Yodelay* "I have, like, five different soundtracks I'm supposed to give songs to. I've had a faw acting offers. They want me to be [the 'Singing Brakeman'] Jimmie Rodgers, do some yodeling. I'm no actor, though; I wouldn't want to inflict my acting on anybody. I already inflict my dancing abilities. I might just build an ark for a year. They aren't teaching that in school anymore."

8 Confusion is good "Critics are conflicted about what I do—as it should be. It's like trying to fit e peg into a hole thet doesn't matter 'cause it changes every year. Funny thing about time: Your context always changes. The has-beens never had it so good, 'cause we'll repackage you some other way. You can be an orphan one week and a professor the next. You want to be simultaneously obsolete and part of the elements—the minerals of the Now scene."

9. His roots are showing "I have an art show coming up in May, at tha Santa Monica Museum of Art. It's a bunch of biker/body-builder computer collages I did when I was 19, when I was living with my grandfather [Fluxus artist Al Hansen] in Germany. But the show will mostly feature his works. We're going to re-create some of his favorite performance art from the '40s through the '60s. Like the famous Yoko Ono piano drop, when she pushed a piano off a ten-story building. You gotta watch out for those Fluxus types—they have fast hands and lead boots."

10 In his spare time, he kicks it cyberpunk visionary–style. "In 20 years they're going to ramamber ma in sine waves of antique frequencies. They're not even gonna haar it, because they'll be hearing the frequencies that dogs listen to. People will be their own radios. They'll be having sex with machines. In tha Tokyo ghatto they're already living with sexbots. It's a one-trip room, baby, like cooking without a stove."

1997 ranking: 4

Jane Dark

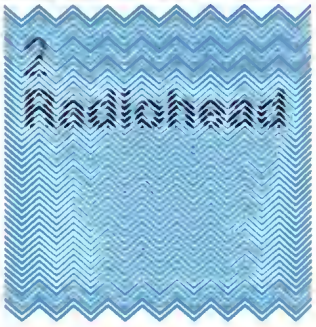
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From left: Ed O'Brien, Thom Yorke, Colin Greenwood, Phil Selway, Jonny Greenwood.



Radiohead bassist Colin Greenwood, international man of mystery

Spin Mr. Bloke? Do you always take calls at hotels under an alias? Colin Greenwood: It's even more necessary when we're in Japan—fans are always calling up. Right now, to e lot of people, Radiohead seem the sovereign artistic operation in rock'n'roll. What, if anything, connects "Creep," *The Bends*, and *OK Computer*? When we rehearse, we're always trying to aim for something else. But we never quite succeed in getting there. For example, we used to call "Creep" the "Scott Walker song." Of course, it doesn't sound et all like him. We wanted it to—we're enormous fans—but it fell short. But many of your fans have this romantic notion of your music as being somehow sourceless—especially *OK Computer*. Completely the opposite. To us, it's rooted in obvious things—what we've listened to, that is. At the same time, the ways in which our music is rehearsed and played and recorded are, if not sourceless, placeless. We are kind of one step removed, not really in the center of things. Well, Oxford is in the center of England, but it's not really a rock'n'roll town, and we don't record in a rock'n'roll place. We rehearse at an old fruit farm—an apple shed, really. I suppose that's where the Pink Floyd comparisons come in. They were from Cambridge. It's that whole middle-class thing. Class, that little-discussed rock'n'roll issue. There's no point apologizing about where you come from. The thing about rock is that people are not just interested in bands because of where they want to go. It's where they want to escape from that matters. Sometimes the actual places they're escaping from don't really exist. When you're onstage, audiences often get blown away by thet famed Radiohead presence. Maybe that's why rock stars drop your name as often as Prada's these deys. [German film director] Wim Wenders came to a show in Cologne last year with his son, who is a Radiohead fan. Wenders had listened to *OK Computer* because he was going to the concert. He liked it, but he didn't think there was a way it could be replicated live. He was amazed that it was. Your studiocraft does tend toward the ambitious. We always talk about doing simple pop records, then end up doing some silly long things—no, I didn't say that. Well, ambitiousness hasn't stranded you. I was having drinks yesterday in Sydney at the top of the ANA Hotel, on the 36th floor, looking down on this neon cityscape of bridges and rivers. In ten days, I'll be in Tokyo. So do Radiohead enjoy being rock stars? Enjoy? You can never say that. It'd be a guilty pleasure, like saying one would enjoy 18 chocolates.

1997 ranking: — **James Hunter**



Boundary-busting hip-hop from a Southern hit machine

Missy "Misdemeanor" Elliott and Tim "Timbaland" Mosley are so tight that folks get their styles tangled. She's the songwriter, he's the producer, and they've been joined at the hip since rapper Magoo brought them together in e Virginia studio when they were aspiring teenage musicians. Jeeping around in Crayola-hued jumpsuits in the video for Elliott's breakout single, "The Rain (Supa Dupa Fly)" or making booty calls from their cell phones in "Beep Me 911," the duo come off like model party people. Actually, they're more like workaholics, the kind who disappear into the studio for weeks at a time.

Today, they're obviously exhausted after a string of television appearances. Elliott, polite and almost painfully shy, slides into a chair, careful not to wrinkle her black vinyl pantsuit. Timbaland, the kind of person who's not all that big on talking, tersely sums up his and Elliott's staggering string of 1997 hits: "Last year was just planting the seeds."

In addition to their collaboration on Elliott's Platinum-plus debut, *Supa Dupa Fly*, which kicked out the Top 10 jams "The Rain" and "Sock It 2 Me," they wrote, produced, and performed on an array of chart-topping tracks for Aaliyah, SWV, and Total, including Ginuwine's downright goofy-sounding sex-you-up "Pony." Timbaland and squeaky-voiced Magoo finished up the year with the brilliant *Welcome to Our World*, slinky, ambient hip-hop so avant-garde, so *out*, that it was dissed by various hip-hop magazines. But the first single, "Up Jumps Da Boogie," hit No. 1 on the rap charts nonetheless, and the album eventually went Gold. Overall, it was a hip-hop perfecta that even Puff Daddy would envy.

More important, Missy and Timbaland expanded the boundaries of hip-hop—the sound, the look, even the perspective. From Timbaland's Virginia neighbor Teddy Riley to New Orleans's Master P, from Texas's Erykah Badu to Georgia's Goodie Mob, the South is currently the hottest breeding ground for new rap and R&B sounds. Removed from the music industry mainstream, Southern artists tend to floss their own style rather than simply try to keep up with the Wu-Tang Clan. Timbaland's skittery, burbling, almost drum'n'bassy layers of beats are unlike anything hip-hop has ever heard before. Unafraid to show her silly side, Elliott dressed in a Hefty Bag–style sweat suit for "The Rain" video, bugged-out Japanimation-style in the "Sock It 2 Me" clip, and rhymed crazy nonsense syllables in songs like "Izzy Izzy Ahh."

"The world just needs some fun right now," Timbaland says. "That's the bottom line," Magoo agrees, "when little kids like you, and older people and whites and blacks and Asians like you, too. 'Cause you don't make no money just appealing to your boy that lives around the corner."

The trio may seem to have sprung fully formed from another planet, but the real secret to their success is a full decade of intensely collaboretive music-making. When they first hooked up in 1988, Timbaland was a DJ, Magoo was an aspiring dancer, and Elliott was one fourth of the female group Sista, who recorded one unreleased album for Elektra. All three artists eventually shacked up together in Norfolk, Virginia, until Jodeci's DeVante Swing moved Tim and Missy up to New Jersey in 1993 to join his songwriting team. "We've got to vibe with each other to make music," Timbaland says. "If we don't vibe, then we just erase the song and go to the next." "We create everything right in the studio," Elliott adds.

Their recording process may sound off-the-cuff, but Magoo remembers differently. "When I think about how hard Missy worked back when we were all living together, it almost makes me want to cry," he says. "I'm talking 365 days a year, she was writing a song a day, sometimes two."

Make no mistake who the (reluctant) star of the show is: Into a hip-hop universe overrun by Versace-clad Cristal sippers and metaphyzikal ghetto warriors, up jumped Miss Misdemeanor. Checking her vanity at the door, she opted for all-out trippiness—giant sunglasses, finger waves, and lime-green wigs. Unashamed of her fireplug body, she worked her pretty eyes like Kim and Foxy work their bodies, and displayed a warm, amiably off-balance flow. Girls could identify, men respected her skills, and Missy bumped against the glass ceiling, one of only a handful of Platinum female MCs. She even runs her own label, The Gold Mind.

"I feel like I'm three different artists inside of one person," she says. "On the writing side, I'm like the old

RADIOHEAD: CHRIS STEELE-PERKINS/MAGNUM; ELLIOTT: JILL GREENBERG; HAIR: MARSHA; MAKEUP: BILLY B; STYLIST: DEE POOLE.



Welcome to the dollhouse: from left, Missy Elliott, Magoo, Timbaland.

Prince. Then, as an entertainer, I could be Micheel Jeckson. And on the singing side, I could be somebody like Chaka Khan. I feel like I'm all of those people rolled up into one. Maybe not as good, but I feel like pieces of them are in me."

Elliott has definitely gotten her due, but she's afraid that Timbaland has been overshadowed by the Bad Boy juggernaut. "Puffy is e greet person," she says, "and I really like working with him. But Timbaland is a very unique producer and I don't feel like he gets enough credit." Timbaland shrugs it off with a "whoever's time it is to shine, they're going to shine." But he'll be back this summer with an as-yet-unnamed new label. And Elliott recently edded songwriting collaborations with Mariah Carey and Brandy to her ever-expanding résumé, demonstrating which part of her split personality is closest to her heart.

"The world is so funny," she says. "You could be the largest star, and the next year you seem like a one-hit wonder. But if you're e writer, you're e writer forever. I'd rether have something that's guaranteed for a lifetime." *1997 ranking:* — **Alan Light**



6 Nine Inch Nails

If anyone on the current alt landscape approaches the status of both icon and auteur, it's Trent Reznor: natural-born chiller on the lost highwey wending its way from Gothville, through the industrial park, and into the new-fangled suburbs of electronica. He's the model action hero for the hypermodern universe (or, perhaps, alt-rock's Don Henley): a recording star who stays famous without actually, you know, releasing albums. Instead he makes singles, remixes, soundtracks, videos, even headlines. But mostly he makes scenes, lending his sensibility to David Lynch and David Bowie, getting toasted by Oliver Stone and quoted by Tori Amos, competing with Alanis Morissette for the most bleepable alt-rock single ("Closer") of the decade. And Reznor even has his own cartoon—oh wait, that's Marilyn Manson. The much-craved new Nine Inch Nails album, featuring production assistance by Alan Muldaur (Smashing Pumpkins, Curve) is expected to arrive this fall. *1997 ranking: 1* **Jane Dark**

5 Puff Daddy

The hardest-working man in show biz—even though his best records sound like no work went into them whatsoever, producer/repper/Bad Boy patriarch Sean "Puffy" Combs is all about facilitation. Take the Vegas-like Puff Daddy & the Family tour, one of the most ambitious spectacles in hip-hop history. "He made sure things were phenomenally tight," says opening act Busta Rhymes, "production, security, *everything*. Whenever there was any drama, he immedietely addressed it from a business standpoint." Puffy's favorite instrument may be "contains a sample from..." but his name has turned up on more good records than anybody else's in the past year, including his own Gothic, zillion-selling debut, *No Way Out*. Impending collaborations—production duties for Lil' Kim and new Bad Boy signings Bleck Rob and Fuzz Bubble, e cover of Led Zep's "Kashmir" with Jimmy Page and Tom Morello on the *Godzilla* soundtrack—suggest that the most overexposed man in music is not slowing down any time soon. Dismissed by authenticity fetishists who'd probably dismiss "Rapper's Delight" as "simple and obvious," Puffy has nonetheless managed to make hip-hop the new lingua franca. "Puffy's trying to reach to the core of what the kids want to feel," says Interscope Records head Jimmy Iovine. "That's why black music is, in a way, reeching the kids so much faster than rock now." *1997 ranking:* — **Chuck Eddy**



4 Hole

The year's most anticipated record, up close and personal

In the lounge aree of e midtown Manhattan recording studio, a TV set absently scrolls the closing credits of the mondo blockbuster movie *Titanic*. Hole bassist Melissa Auf der Maur and guitarist Eric Erlandson are plopped down, tired and comfortable, thumbing through fashion magazines while awaiting their band leader, numb et this point to the irony of the videotape flickering in the background. Next door, Courtney Love is winding up her evening's work, hoping to better e previous vocal take for a bracing new treck called "Northern Star," one of 13 set to appear on the long, long, long-awaited follow-up to 1994's benchmark *Live Through This*. Hole have traveled to New York at the behest of homesick producer Michael Beinhorn (Soundgarden, Red Hot Chili Peppers) to finally wrap up a record that Love has taken to calling, half-jokingly, "our *Titanic*," a record that has cost e Cameron-esque amount of time and money, thet's taken on rumors like the luxury liner took on water, and whose stakes, like those of the movie, are frighteningly high.

Briefly: Can the most controversial woman in rock'n'roll history (think about it) create a record that proves once and for all (or again) that her artistry is equal to her fame? Can she vacation from rock, swim with Hollywood sharks and pley dress-up for Anna Wintour, and then come back with any edge, with any cred, with any burning desire to start fires? Four years on, with grunge now nostalgia, with rock in a dip, with Lilith ascendant, with 30 in the rearview, does Courtney Love still metter?

We won't know the full answer until the new album, sleted for e June 2 release, succeeds or doesn't in the marketplece, but eerly listens bode well: The new record is e rich, complicated, and even mature work that succeeds like a top-notch Hollywood film, balancing art, craft, and commerce so deftly you don't notice the perpetual tug-of-war. The darkness is still there, but it's melted from anger to sedness; singing has elbowed aside Love's gasoline-gargle; and e dusky pop-rock bittersweetness—think Big Star, or Fleetwood Mec—has largely supplanted the growl of grunge. If *Live Through This* was a jagged-edged memory-glass of being out-of-control and twentysomething in Seattle, then the new album chronicles e sober thirtysomething's L.A. aftermath, a choir of ghosts singing backup. Call it *Pretty on the Outside*.

A little later that evening, vocals in the can, Love sits down to e light back and shoulder massage from her voice coach and a discussion with her bandmates over how

NIN: DAN WINTERS; PUFFY: DANA LIXENBURG/OUTLINE.



From left: Melissa Auf der Maur, Courtney Love, Patty Schemel, Eric Erlandson.

best to attribute the somewhat amorphous writer/arranger role played on the record by friend Billy Corgan. ("Do we really have to go there?" asks Erlandson. "Why not say he really helped on some songs and just leave it at that," responds Love.) The album is still weeks ewey from completion—backing vocals not yet in place, strings to be added, title to be determined—but it's not too soon for the band to provide quick rundowns on some of the album's more surefire numbers:

"Reasons to Be Beautiful" Love: "One morning, I wrote down the phrase REASONS TO BE BEAUTIFUL, and I listed them, and then I wrote down the phrase REASONS TO BE UGLY, and I listed them." Auf der Maur: "That song has my favorite lyrics of yours on the record." Love: [sings] "Ten good reasons to stay alive / Ten good reasons that I can't find." Auf der Maur: "We were going to call the record *Reasons to Be Beautiful* at one point." Love: "But I was afraid it was too beauty magazine."

"Malibu" Erlandson: "That'e our Topanga Canyon summer song." Love: "There's a lot of geography on this record. I've had this whole reletionship with Malibu, it's one of my towns, one of my love affairs.... It's such a Malibu song, a rehab-boy-goes-to-the-ocean song. [sings] 'Hey baby, I'm gonne rescue you / I'm gonna set you free, tonight.' The whole rescue-you, dig-me-out thing. I love that."

"Northern Star" Love: "I had gone to see the David Fincher movie *The Game*, and I really wanted to do this new movie of his, *Fight Club*, and I was thinking about what a dark bastard Fincher was, and I was really competitive about it. So when Eric started playing the melody, the lyrics just came from this wellspring of 'all right, you dark bastard, I'll show you wretched.'"

"Sugar Coma" Love: "It's from our Unplugged days. It started out all peppy and poppy, but then Jeff Buckley died, and it became an homage to Evan [Dando] and Jeff and Brian Wilson. It's all about self-destructive pop boys."

"Celebrity Skin" (the title refers to a particularly craven Hollywood glam-pop band from the early '90s) Erlandson: "The song sums that whole ecene up so well." Love: "It was getting dark outside in Hollywood, and we were in the rehearsal room. We had successfully polished off a song, and these guys were like, 'What do you want to write about now?' And I said, 'I want to write about L.A.' And Eric said, 'You always want to write about L.A.' So the song came like that [sneps her fingers]. 'Cause those lyrics are just funny and easy. I really like the 'hooker/waitress,' 'model/actress' lines. But then there's the part that goes 'No second billing / 'Cause you're a star now,' which I think is so stupid for me to have written. But it just came out. What was I gonna do?"

1997 ranking: 8 **Craig Marks**

Prodigy

Assaying the future with rocktronica apostle Liam Howlett

Spin You recently declared that *The Fat of the Land* was going to be the last Prodigy elbum ever. Is thet still the case? **Liam Howlett:** Oh yes, absolutely. It has to be like thet. My philosophy is, until I get back into the studio and get excited about something else, some new direction, it'e like nothing else is ever going to heppen for me. "Firestarter" and *Fat* were embraced by the rock meinstreem, prompting a lot of dance punists to sneer thet Prodigy have nothing to do with club music, that you're just e rock'n'roll band now. Care to comment? I'm in the business of writing exciting music, I'm not sitting here thinking what I can and cannot do. "Firestarter" had guitars, but it's still a dance tune. People who say we're just a rock'n'roll band, well...we're a rock'n'roll band—so what? Maybe it's a better place for us to be right now. When people ask you whet music you're into, these days you seem to talk about Supergrass or Rage Against the Machine, rather than jungle or techno tracks. If people ask me what actually inspires me to make music, it's late-early '70s funk and '80s hip-hop—B.T. Express, the Meters, the roots of hip-hop, the rare grooves the DJe used to spin. I love to spend hours in record stores listening to the original breaks. "Breathe" reminded me of late punk/early Oi! bands like Angelic Upstarts and Cockney Rejects. But you never grew up on punk, you were e B-boy, right? I was never into punk 'cause I was just too young. The first music I got into was ska, which had punk elements. When we did our first album, *Experience*, in 1992, some journalist was telling us, "Yeah, it could almost be punk." At the time I said, "Nah, when I'm writing I'm thinking more about Pink Floyd." But now I realize the spirit of our music, the do-it-yourself–ness, always was punk. Does the political side of punk ever interest you? Sometimes. The thing about Prodigy is there's alweys scope for something else, and now there's scope for lyrics that ectually mean something. We were stuck in a position of coming from the dance scene and not needing lyrics to have too much weight. Now all of a sudden, we can write about stuff thet'e happened to us. It's somewhere we can go, meybe, with the new album—if there is another album. I've never seen politics as an important part of Prodigy, but personal experience and stuff like that.... Enough's happened to us to write some fucking good lyrics! How do you respond to the criticism over the "Smack My Bitch Up" video; thet despite the gender twist at the end, it's still porn, end it's still exploitative? The thing I like about the video isn't the twist at the end—which is pretty dumb, if you ask me—but the wey it's been shot, the wey the edits fit with the music. I don't regret releasing "Smack" as a eingle, because it's taken us down a level from that in-the-lime-light vibe. It was good that it didn't go high in the charts. In a British music monthly, you descnbed Prodigy as "the most dangerous band" in the world. What did you mean by that? I meant the danger in it for us, not for anybody else. It's got to be dangerous for us for the band to survive. Constantly testing the band and seeing what we can and cannot do. "Firestarter" was a dangerous record to release at the time—it doesn't feel dangerous now, obviously, because that's the sound now—but it had guitars, it had so many things that could have gone egeinst us. It was definitely one of the most extreme records of that year, probably of the decade. Although Prodigy sold two million albums in Amenca, and the Chemical Brothers half a million, the general feeling in 1998 is that "electron-a" never quite happened. Everyone makes out electronica to be this "next big thing," but it's just a record company ploy to sell shitloads of records. The only reason we've sold millions of records is we've got the tunes. You don't sell two million records on hype. *1997 ranking: 24* **Simon Reynolds**



From left: Leeroy Thornhill, Maxim Reality, Liam Howlett, Keith Flint.

HOLE: GUZMAN; PRODIGY: STEVE GULLICK.



From left: Pras Michel, Lauryn Hill, Wyclef Jean.

9 Fugees

So, what do you do after you more or less revolutionize hip-hop? Fire up the solo joints and grow the family. Since the Fugees conquered the pop world—and vanquished gangsta provincialism—with *The Score* in 1996, the Refugee Camp has become one of rap's most active clans. Soon after the Fugees' giant goodwill concert in Haiti last year, Wyclef Jean released the high-spirited pan-Caribbean treatise *The Carnival* ("*Oui, oui*, y'all"), which introduced such "Refugee All-Stars" as ultra-magnetic MC John Forte and hardball rhymer Canibus, each of whom will release their respective debuts this summer. Jean says he would like the collective to develop into a cross between "Wu-Tang and Motown, in which you'll have different All-Stars on different labels, but it'll all be part of Refugee Camp." Meanwhile, the divine Lauryn Hill had a baby, recorded an upcoming R&B record, and directed videos for Aretha Franklin and Common. "I miss the Fugees," says fellow member Pras Michel, who is currently working on an LP of his own. "But all of this is just gonna make the force stronger. Prepare for the 1999 class reunion." *1997 ranking: 9* **Will Hermes**

8 Ani DiFranco

Indie folk's go-grrrl worries about blowing up, quotes Nike party lines by accident, and creams over the ultimate band



Spin You've been doing the European festival thing for the past two months. How is it to be back in America? Ani DiFranco: It's fucking terrifying to come back from God-knows-where and heve infantile, hysterical Christian right-wingers dominating the national discourse with who-slept-with-whom shenanigans. They just executed a woman in Texas. Anybody heard of Iraq? Can we talk health care? What must the world think of us? How big a part does social awareness play in your definition of a folksinger? Politics are very important. Music thet rises out of e given community is much more likely to be in touch with the issues of that community than is slick L.A., Nashville, or New York industry hooha. I'm very leery of people who tell stories far outside of themselves. You know, "I come from Long Island and I speak for the Native Americans," or "I come from Dayton and I speak for the rain forest." Roots, world music, original rap/hip-hop—those are all kinds of folk music. I know I'm going to get slammed for saying that. What's your next project? There was just a show at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame to celebrate the Woody Guthrie Archives. I'm in Austin mixing e live album of the show. An amazing crew showed up: Bruce Springsteen, the Indigo Girls, Arlo Guthrie, Ramblin' Jack Elliott, Billy Bragg, Deve Pirner—that's not even everybody. I do "Do-Re-Mi." I don't know what to call it. Maybe, *This Album Costs $14.98*. Would you join the Hall of Fame if you were ever elected? I'm too polite not to. It's my mother in me, *God forbid I should hurt their feelings*. But it's all pretty meaningless. I would feel it was ironic at best. Your new album, *Little Plastic Castle*, starts with ska and ends with jazz. What's up with that? There's a definite ska feel to the [title treck]. I bought e compiletion of crazy, skanky Desmond Dekker recordings last year and was heavy into it for a while. "Pulse" may strike you as jazz-like because of Jon Hassell's horn meandering through it. I'm a big fan, so I just called him up and said, "Hey, it's what's-her-face, some chick you've never met—and I need you to do the Jon thing on this track of mine!" The lyrics seem a little more measured than on *Dilate* or *Not a Pretty Girl*. I'm not sure what it means. One of my rules is: Never try to do anything. *Just do it*. But even when the words sound like they're gushing out, they're really not. You never improvise your lyrics in the studio, Dylan-style? Well, I fuck 'em up a lot, if that counts! Given that you want to stay a sub-corporate Righteous Babe, how will you feel if this record really blows up? If *Little Plastic Castle* goes Gold or something, it's going to be weird. I'm kind of uncomfortable with my level of success elreedy. I mean, there are harder things to contend with than unexpected notoriety—people have harder jobs. But it'll become more and more of a challenge to just be human and focus on the music and the audience. My friend Amy [Ray of the Indigo Girls] and I were talking about how we long to play in those dank little bars egain. But you're planning an amphitheater-style tour this summer. We're doing a shed tour, but we don't even like to call it that because it sounds so big and yucky. We call it "George," like, 'Oh yeah, after the college tour we're doing George." What about that Rolling Thunder Pussy Revue you used to joke ebout doing—a sort of anti–Lilith Fair, anti-Palooza thing? I'd love to get Oumou Sangare, this amazing West African singer/violinist. And Tribe 8, Lucinda Williams, Salt-N-Pepa—they rock so hard—Mary Margaret O'Hara, Queen Latifah. Boy, now I'm pipe-dreaming. We were talking about having e house band with different women fronting it. Can you imagine a revolving door on the mike, with Me'Shell NdégéOcello on bass, Bonnie Raitt on guitar, Sheila E. on drums? Fuck, I'd be *creaming*. How was touring with Bob Dylan? I've never really been into opening for anybody, though conventional wisdom says you have to. But when Dylan's people called, I figured if I was ever going to do it, this was the time. It was fascinating to learn the protocol, but it made me happy to keep doing things the wey I've been doing them. But talk to me in 30 years: I might be, like, "Everybody off *my* bus!" *1997 ranking: 21* **(Dark)**

10 Marilyn Manson



Marilyn Manson pushes everyone's buttons. Critics sneered that *Antichrist Superstar* was derivative and shallow; antique moralists fag-baited him at Columbine; principals suspended kids for taking his autobiography, *The Long, Hard Road Out of Hell*, to school; and, worst of all, Mr. Blackwell put him on the 1997 list of Worst Dressed Women. Tearing up Bibles and wiping himself with the American flag got him in trouble from Oklahoma to New Jersey, while an honest-to-goodness Christian conspiracy wrongly accused him of everything from [illegible] to [illegible] virginia. But for the legions of [illegible] devils who use Manson to flip off parents, God, and country, he balances '70s excess with '90s self-improvement. For instance: "The only thing you can hope for is to be creative, to learn, to be more than a person who sits around and watches TV," Manson says. With frequent appearances on the *Charlie Rose* show and *Politically Incorrect* (where he sparred with G. Gordon Liddy) under his belt, and an upcoming album sweetened by Billy Corgan, Manson seems poised for a new role: America's scuzziest pundit.

1997 ranking: 22 **Jesse Berrett**

Pearl Jam



From left: Eddie Vedder, Mike McCready, Stone Gossard, Jeff Ament, Jack Irons.

We're accustomed to picturing Pearl Jam battling the world: Ticketmaster, MTV, CDs, *Rolling Stone*. But when the five bandmates think back, they're as likely to recall battling one another. For guitarist Mike McCready, the pivotal moment came in 1995, after a food-poisoned Eddie Vedder left the stage in San Francisco's Golden Gate Park, the culmination of a thoroughly botched tour. "We had a meeting and just said [to Vedder]: 'Look, do you still want to be part of this band, do you still want to do this? Do we *embarrass* you?' Brought up all the issues that had been dogging us. Because we had to. If we hadn't, it might not have lasted."

Now, one is told, Pearl Jam have stopped fighting the industry. Their new album sounds more like what the world thinks Pearl Jam should sound like than anything by the band in years. The album is called *Yield*, and the concept was suggested by guitarist Stone Gossard, who also wrote a new song that goes, "I'll stop trying to make a difference." "I think we let our guard down a little bit," says Gossard. "There's definitely some big rock riffs on this, and it's great." Vedder confirms matters with a bit less enthusiasm. "It's less challenging. It's a good, mainstream record. You go from 'versus' [*Vs.*] to 'yield.' Whatever. Things have changed. I don't know if it's age, but I'm just getting tired of complaining. All this energy going absolutely nowhere."

And yet, when you talk to the musicians in this band, it's clear that *Yield* is less about conceding to outsiders than listening to one another. McCready, who's responsible for the music on three of the album's first four cuts, salutes Vedder for "letting go some of the control" on this album. For the first time, the voice of grunge autism is singing lyrics he didn't write. "That was huge," agrees bassist and quiet outdoors–type Jeff Ament. "The fact that Ed, and Stone, and everybody could be excited about a song that I wrote says a lot about where we're at as friends." Gossard, traditionally the dominant musician in the group, also stepped back some, finding in the gesture "a sort of Zen quality: The thing that is most important to you, you have to give up—and somebody has to give it back to you." Vedder seems almost bemused: "I don't even think I threw an idea into the pot until the end of the first three-week period. I thought it was good to encourage all that stuff. My stuff, I'll bust that out any day, that's a piece of cake."

Of course, it was resentment over "Eddie stuff" that was largely responsible for the tension within Pearl Jam in the first place. Nineteen ninety-four's *Vitalogy*, an album in which Vedder essentially took over and tried to punkify Pearl Jam, marked the breaking point. (Adding to the stress, disaffected drummer Dave Abbruzzese was fired before the record came out, and McCready, by his own admission, was "fucked-up all the time. Drinking a lot, doing a lot of drugs.") The two ex-members of Green River, the indie outfit that spawned both Mudhoney and Pearl Jam, weren't exactly taken with Vedder's late discovery of the avant-garde. "I wasn't sure about 'Bugs,'" says Ament of that peculiar experiment, "and great as 'Spin the Black Circle' was lyrically, I felt that musically I was in that band ten years ago." "I just stepped back and let Ed finish it," says Gossard. "I think we all did. I was just praying that it wasn't going to be our last record."

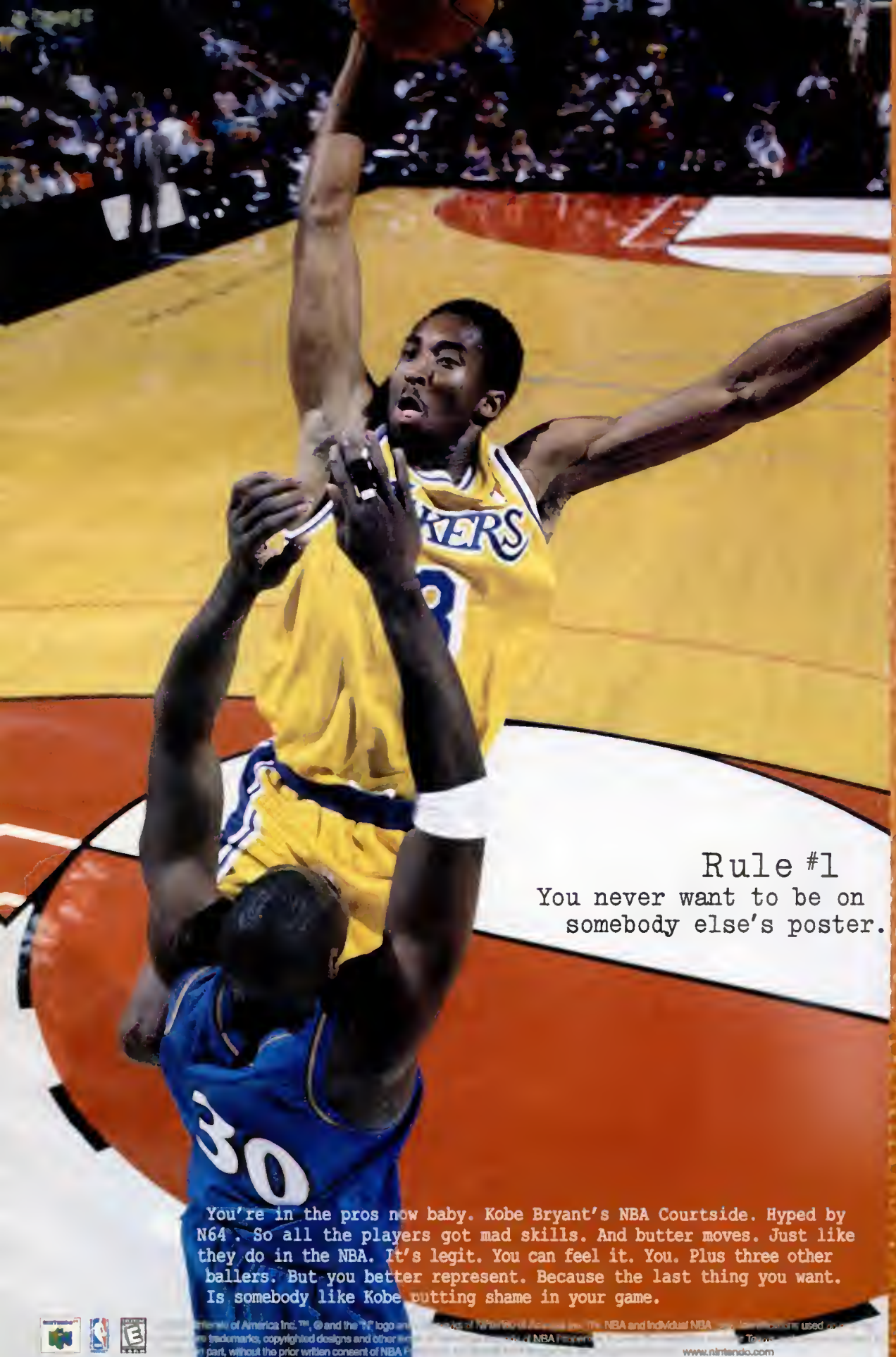
With drummer Jack Irons—a longtime friend of Vedder's, another Californian to balance all the Seattleites, and a married parent who'd left his wild years behind him with the Red Hot Chili Peppers and now has a guru—taking over on 1996's *No Code*, tensions subsided. Still, only Vedder (influenced by his collaboration with the late Pakistani mystical singer Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan) was really happy with the groove-heavy, rock-light feel of *Vitalogy*—a disappointment to fans and critics alike, and the weakest-selling album of Pearl Jam's career. "The songs were a little bit fatty in places," concludes Ament, who nonetheless loved Vedder's searching lyrics. As Gossard analyzes things: "We got self-conscious. Here we are, this hugely popular band, and we didn't really feel like we deserved it."

With new album sessions scheduled for February 1997, McCready, Ament, and Gossard undertook to revive the Pearl Jam they loved. In a PJ first, each arrived at the initial practices with finished demos, prepared with the help of different Seattle drummers (Irons lives in California). McCready contributed the music to "Brain of J," "Faithfull," and "Given to Fly," the latter two written at his condo during the Christmas '96 blizzard that shut down Seattle. Regarding similarities between "Given to Fly," *Yield*'s first single, and Led Zeppelin's "Going to California," the group's classic rocker acknowledges, with post-12-step candor, "I probably subconsciously stole it. I hope they don't come after me."

Ament's best stroke was "Pilate," which hooks funkily around the priceless bizarro chorus "Like Pilate, I have a dog." He says now that he'd been reading the experimental novel *The Master & Margarita*, by Russian Mikhail Bulgakov, which ends with Pilate on the edge of a cliff with his dog and a guitar. Gossard, meanwhile, showed up with "In Hiding," a ferocious, coiling ballad. "Experimenting is great, and we'll always do that," he says, urbane enough to have stopped sweating his cred. "But let's make sure we do what comes naturally, too. Let's write four-minute rock songs, with good hooks, and a great vocal melody, that tell cool stories about being alive right now."

Yield is a real rarity: a rock album that's well-adjusted without being boring. Pearl Jam are regularly berated for a lack of smarts, but it took real savvy to pull this off, a gut understanding of how both punk and mainstream rock work. When Gossard felt *Yield* still needed a jolt, he took a minute, bashed out "Do the Evolution," and demoed it for the band the next day. "As people get older they want to overarrange things." The key, says Gossard, is "allowing

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yourself to play two dumb parts and not think that you need a bridge."

Pearl Jam's supporting musicians are clearly jubilant about *Yield*. "Everybody's shoulders went down about three inches," says Ament. "I honestly feel like we can go out and tour now, maybe just go out and have fun." They won't do a video after all, but they've made the decision to let Ticketmaster have its way when there's no other choice. Last fall, for instance, in a show that certainly cost more than $20 to attend, they opened for the Rolling Stones in Oakland. And come September they can finally fulfill another of their boyhood rock fantasies: headlining Madison Square Garden.

On the other hand, how Eddie Vedder, member in good standing of the fellowship of troubled, crazily charismatic lead singers, feels about recent developments is anyone's guess. His new mantra is, "It just doesn't matter," always said with a smile. He'll tell you that he's spoken with Neil Young, Keith Richards, and Pete Townshend about artistic longevity, and the lesson is, "They don't give a fuck, and I don't give a fuck either." He acknowledges the accessibility of *Yield*, yet he can't stop talking about his desire to experiment more: "If I want to make a song based on sound effects from the movie *Mars Attacks*, I can do that." He insists his favorite Pearl Jam songs are the secret little weirdnesses tacked onto the ends of albums. "That's our legacy. That's the good stuff. Fuck lyrics. I'm working on singing more without saying anything."

Dutifully, I point out that, unlike his heroes, who'd never mock the importance of their most grandiose songs, his stated position seems rather self-canceling. "Isn't it great?" he answers. "It really takes the pressure off. I'm not a scholar. Don't follow me. A lot of the songs are about escape, about letting go. Then I think I'm done and I realize they're on the set list for six weeks, and I have to go through it again." And go through it he will. The truth is, Vedder sounds as committed vocally on *Yield* as he ever has. And though he'd never admit it, Vedder is doing what all enduring rockers successfully achieve from time to time: reconnecting with his audience.

Still, if the other guys in the group can tell you different parables of how they learned to harness their energy, Vedder just lets his live wires sparkle on the floor. One minute he's saying mankind won't last past 2010 ("I'd do everything you want to do before then"), the next he's opening his trusty suitcase to show off the book he's reading: *How Science Will Revolutionize the 21st Century*. He explains in detail the time he spends watching insects. He argues that a Pearl Jam album is just a sliver of his creativity, talks vaguely about movies he's working on, about the Saturday night recording sessions that go on in his basement with whomever's in town, about some music he recorded in Italy with an Italian bassist and drummer. There are lots of tapes. "It's disorganized. I'm looking for volunteers. Minimum wage, good benefits. Probably take them a month."

Eddie Vedder is the reason millions of people care about Pearl Jam, his jumbles a Rorshach test every adolescent rock fan needs to unscramble. But try and imagine being in what Gossard calls "a five-person art project" with him. In an interesting twist of fate, it's the hunger to reclaim Pearl Jam as a rock band that Gossard, Ament, and McCready brought into the *Yield* sessions which give the group vitalogy today. Maybe there's more to the picture than meets the eye. As it happens, Jeff Ament doesn't have a dog. And the song "Faithfull," which seems so self-explanatory from this group of true believers, doesn't mean that at all. The real point, according to Gossard: "Just because you have faith doesn't mean shit." And as for "I'll stop trying to make a difference," Vedder corrects me on that one straightaway. "It's 'I'll stop trying to make a difference / No way.' No way I'll stop!"

1997 ranking: 7 **Eric Weisbard**

12 Cornershop


Cornershop's Tjinder Singh.

The boys of Oasis are better-known for their piss-taking than for their boosterism, but like most pop junkies, they've been giving it up for Cornershop of late. So how did the sample'n'sitar outfit fare on a recent arena tour with the Brothers Dim? "It was easy as fuck," says ever-modest Cornershop proprietor Tjinder Singh. Times weren't always so easy for an Anglo-Asian indie-rock crew with a taste for Punjabi folk and the Velvet Underground—"6 A.M. Jullander Shere" from Cornershop's 1995 release, *Woman's Gotta Have It*, is their very own "Sister Ray." But Cornershop entered a new realm with last year's *When I Was Born for the 7th Time*, which deftly combines Pavement-worthy pop deadpans, a global sound palette, and a canny postcolonial subtext—and earned 1997 "Album of the Year" props from *Spin*. The band's forward-looking DJ/rock fusion should mutate further with Clinton, a more "technology-oriented" side project featuring Singh and bandmate Ben Ayres. So-named because they "like the way it sounds phonetically," Clinton may feature help from Noel Gallagher and Cut Chemist, the L.A. turntablist currently working with indie hip-hoppers like Jurassic Five. In the meantime, Singh is working on his own wheels-of-steel skills. "I just do it to relax, mainly," he says, "and to take my mind off how skint we are."

1997 ranking: — **(Hermes)**

13 Beastie Boys

It seems like only yesterday that these former Brooklyn brats were tapping into hip-hop's inner "Louie Louie" and yo-yo-yo-ing themselves into that part of our hearts reserved for our inner 14-year-old boy. But the Beastie Boys have got personae like J.D.'s got Salinger: Today, Mike D, Adam Horovitz, and Adam Yauch are human rights defenders and cool hunters who oversee a kingdom that includes the annual Tibetan Freedom Concert, the upstart Grand Royal label, and a must-read zine of the same name. "I admire the way they're always changing," says Atari Teenage Riot frontman Alec Empire, whose Digital Hardcore label is partially distributed by Grand Royal. "I think they *have* to experiment." Over the years, that has meant excursions into avant hip-hop, hardcore punk, and trippy funk, resulting in brilliant albums like *Paul's Boutique* and *Ill Communication*. Since the Beasties' last full-length LP, 1996's *The In Sound From Way Out!*, was a collection of fab little funk instrumentals, it's anyone's guess what's in store for their "top secret" next record, which is expected to drop in July. *1997 ranking: 12* **Sarah Vowell**

SINGH: SNORRI BROS.; BEASTIE BOYS: DANNY CLINCH.


From left: Adam Horovitz, Mike D, Adam Yauch.



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14. PJ Harvey

Sex, religion, and Second Comings

One of the most provocative lines PJ Harvey ever sang is the sexy-creepy "Jesus come closer" on "To Bring You My Love." So it's quite perfect that indie film director Hal Hartley cast the British singer as a modern-day Mary Magdalene in his Second Coming send-up, *The Book of Life*. Magdalene, the harlot turned Jesus groupie, embodies both temptation and devotion; Harvey, more than any musician of her generation, superimposes the spiritual onto the physical with incredibly fleshy force. And in the movie, which is set for release next winter, the sinner/Son of God relationship has a distinctly romantic charge.

"It's quite apparent that they have a deep-rooted relationship," Harvey says of her first film role. "It all has to do with the way they look at each other. Everything begins when they land at JFK Airport in New York on December 31, 1999. 'Magdalene' is Jesus's companion-cum-bodyguard, dressed in black like a rock chick. She takes care of him because his head is very occupied—like making sure he crosses the road without getting run over."

As curious as Eve, as slinky as Salome, as maternal as Mary, and as scary as a plague of locusts, Harvey could take on a variety of biblical roles. Not only does her voice have many mansions, the dramaturgy of her songs allows her to keep changing costumes, growling like a terrifying sex fiend one minute, swooning like a jilted lover the next. "The way [an actor] gets into a character and plays a part also applies to my songwriting," she says. "I imagine myself in some other role or situation."

Though Harvey's gigantic vocal presence overshadows her band on *Dry*, *Rid of Me*, and *To Bring You My Love*, she's been working well with others over the past few years. Collaborations include a song on Nick Cave's *Murder Ballads*, a duet with French composer Pascal Comelade, a forthcoming single with Tricky, and 1996's full-length *Dance Hall at Louse Point* with her teen-years bandmate John Parish. That album is somber, lyrical, and so very *English*, lacking the primordial blues ooze that makes Harvey's earlier, self-centered work New World grand.

Harvey may have arrived on the scene during the grunge era, that glorious time when pop's glamour married punk's defiance, but there's something old-time rock star about her. Maybe it's the feather boas, but she's always seemed to have more in common with Aretha than Tad. And at a time when hip-hop and dopey girlie folk are making alt-rock seem like an afterthought, many fans are hoping Harvey's upcoming album, *Is This Desire?*, due out in late '98, will save the capital-R kind of Rock. An idea, by the way, she finds laughable: "If I thought that, I would have been so terrified that I couldn't have written any songs. I just follow my heart at this stage in life." *1997 ranking: 10* **(Vowell)**





Tom Rowlands, left, and Ed Simons.

15. Chemical Brothers

The Chemical Brothers booted electronica's butt well before the genre started fizzling into graph-paper shapelessness, and for that alone they deserve a medal. Chemical music is a constant tug-of-war between loops and fury, between rock 'em–sock 'em robot-rap beats and the crazed air-raid sound effects of techno. Devoid of singers, guitarists, or songs that advance from point A to point B, their live sets still manage to physically bludgeon baffled rock fans, turning them into unlikely converts.

"Before a show in Boston," says bemused Tom Rowlands, "a roadie moving our equipment was asking, 'Who are these faggots?' But then after the show he said, 'You guys rock pretty hard for a non-rock band.'" He and his partner Ed Simons have since unintentionally sired their own bastard-child subgenre, the so-called Big Beat. "Five years ago, all those large hip-hop beats seemed like a good idea," Rowlands apologizes. Which isn't to say the Brothers have given them up—they've just thrown more ideas into the mix. "Where Do I Begin," a collaboration with electro-folkie Beth Orton on *Dig Your Own Hole*, proved 1997's best Sunday-morning soundtrack, and the duo's now-in-the-works third album may reflect an increasing fascination with psychedelic-era theremin rock. "It may not be progress, but at least it's *movement*," Rowlands says. "And our music moves like mercury."
1997 ranking: 18 **(Eddy)**

CHEMICAL BROS.: SNORRI BROS.; HARVEY: VALERIE PHILLIPS



WU-TANG: BOB BERG.

16 Wu-Tang Clan

There have been radical black art collectives before—Sun Ra's Arkestra, the Art Ensemble of Chicago, George Clinton's funk duchy—but none of them had their own 900 number, or their own clothing line. None had their own action-figure pop stars, their own CD-ROM-enhanced records, or their own $1 million videos. None, in short, pushed as dark, fecund, and uncompromisingly weird an underground ethos so deep into the mainstream that we'd call them hip-hop's Greteful Dead if we weren't too scared. No, that would only be the Wu-Tang Clan.

Currently, the Staten Island, New York, rap dynasty is in something of an interregnum. Last year, when the 11-member team merged to drop what should heve been a devastating follow-up to their 1993 debut *Enter the 36 Chambers*, the world suddenly seemed more interested in getting jiggy than bringing the ruckus. Matters weren't helped by the fact that the baroque double-CD *Wu-Tang Forever* had few discernible singles, or that the group dropped out of the much-publicized Rage Against the Machine tour somewhere in Indiana. Add to this a weapons charge against Ghostface Killah and an assault charge against Method Man (which Method Man calls "baseless"), and you've got a less than banner year.

But the Wu is nothing if not resilient. "This is gonna be the Wu-Tang year," RZA told MTV in January. Nineteen ninety-eight, says Wu star Method Man, will mark the return of "grimy, ragtime niggas." RZA now looks at *Wu-Tang Forever* as a sort of Wu roster sampler. "I think the double album let fans choose their favorite people," he says. "And nght now they looking forward to their solo joints." This year the Clan will loose upon the earth solo debuts by Cappadonna, Killah Priest, Shabazz the Disciple, Inspectah Deck, and U-God, along with second albums by Method Man, Ghostface Killah, Ol' Dirty Bastard, and RZA, most on different labels. Mastermind RZA's multi-pronged record-industry conquest seems to be proceeding just fine, a plan as inscrutable as P-Funk cosmology or Wu-Tang Illuminati rants, but with its own slowly unfolding genius. The same might even prove true for *Wu-Tang Forever*. "Two years from now you gonna throw it on," RZA says ominously. "And it'll be like a time-release thing. As time goes on you gonna start understanding what we meant."

1997 ranking: 3

Chris Norris

Tomorrow's Top 40 contenders today

1 | D'Angelo
A true R&B anomaly: a great singer who doesn't run scales, a lady-killer who barely moves, and a hip-hop realist with some real songs he'd like to sing for you. D'Angelo made windshields across the country fog up with his caramelized swoon on 1995's *Brown Sugar* and "She's Always in My Mind," a single on the *Scream 2* soundtrack. Though D'Angelo has been musically homeless since his label, EMI, folded last year, he's got e brand-new record ready to go as soon as he signs on the dotted line.
(Sasha Frere-Jones)

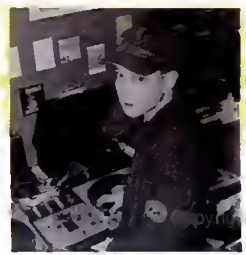
2 | Sean Lennon
He recalls John with his wistful '60s- and '70s-tinged pop, and he recalls Yoko with the company he keeps—such New York avants as Cibo Matto's Yuka Honda, who produced his beautiful upcoming debut *Into the Sun*. Not just another rock-brat going into the family business, this singer/songwriter/multi-instrumentalist is earning his own pop pedigree.
(Gaylord Fields)

3 | Canibus
Mommy, make that weird rapping man stop! A veteran of mix-tapes, Wyclef's Refugee Camp, and the red-hot single "Second Round Knockout," this battle-hungry fellow may "strip you naked and make you hug e cactus" or "Hop into the backseat of a cab and rhyme / Till the meter says 9-9-9-9," but either way he's voted Most Likely To Be Audible Everywhere in 1998 when his debut album drops this month. Good thing he'll now be able to afford health insurance, beceuse he "finds little pieces of MCs in my feces weekly." **(S.F.J.)**



4 | Modest House
On *Lonesome Crowded West*, singer Isaac Brock (see page 40) comes correct with confessional spittle that would do D.Boon proud, describing a landscape of long roads and slim hopes that feels as familiar es his social awareness feels unique in the navel-gazing indie universe. The melodies mean it even when they aren't pretty, the fractured forms don't feel forced, and these Northwesterners still sound like punks even though they obviously went to the record store in the past year. And bought something. **(S.F.J.)**

5 | Kid Koala
A young turntablist from Toronto, Kid Koala has a fast, funny mind with even faster, funnier hands. His *Scratchcretchratchetch*



13 Tori Amos

The Cornflake Girl grows up

Toward the end of a lengthy and demanding international tour in support of her last album, *Boys for Pele*, Tori Amos discovered she was going to have a baby. She was thrilled. Her plan was not to worry about recording another album for a while, but to finish up the last shows, return to England, relax, and be a mom. "I played the KROQ Christmas show three months pregnant and I was just on cloud nine," she says. But back home, two days before Christmas, the cramping and bleeding started and Amos knew immediately what was wrong. "I was so freaked out that I didn't let my boyfriend drive the truck to the hospital," she says. "I drove, just because it was the only thing...." Long, long, really long pause. "You're just willing your body to keep this life, but it's like, Tori, it's over. You sit there and go, maybe it'll be okay. And you're one of those ones where it just wasn't okay."

In those horrible weeks after the miscarriage, the songs just started coming. "And they came from all corners," she says. "I'm calling this record *From the Choir Girl Hotel* because I felt like I didn't know if I was sending dispatches from it or if I'm part of their troupe and they let me sing alto with them sometimes. But [the choir girls] were incredibly comforting to me." What they told her, she says, was, "Look, you can't be a mother right now, but you can be a woman. Not a little girl anymore, or an adolescent, or a girl on the verge of womanhood."

Amos famously believes choir girls and Vikings and other assorted beings inhabit her head and guide her pen as she composes her songs. This is reason enough for some to dismiss her as a dippy ethereal fairy goddess piano lady a few tarot cards short of a full deck. Which is not quite accurate, or fair. Here's a theory: From the age of three, Tori Amos was a child piano prodigy, banging out music with a grace and skill she was years away from truly comprehending. How does a prodigy better cope with something so innate—and yet so Other—than by making the determination that something (or someone) else was occupying her head, making her make the music?

And besides, Amos is not a blinders-on seeker, looking for a quick spiritual salve—these characters of hers just as often complicate things as resolve them. Unlike most New Agey songbirds, she doesn't conjure images of hugs and cute baby animals and gentle weeping. Instead, she writes songs about life's potential to turn out hideously wrong; of snot-dripping, puffy-eyed projectile sobbing; and of the perseverance that somehow impels people to keep plugging away for happiness. Her lyrics can be loopy and subjective or they can be straightforward and cut painfully to the quick, and *From the Choir Girl Hotel* has some killers: "She's convinced she could hold up a glacier," go the lyrics to "Spark," "but she couldn't keep baby alive."

One of the big lessons Amos took away from the experience of losing the baby was the importance of letting go. "To love so much that you surrendered, to say, 'Well, this isn't your time and you don't want to come now'—that kind of not needing to control another life was a big step for me. Because I try not to be controlling, but everybody knows I'm Attila the Honey."

Because she hadn't planned on making another record right away, and because she was thinking about issues of letting go, Amos was caught just off-guard enough to make some interesting decisions about what the new album should be. For one thing, she wanted to shift the emphasis away from the girl writhing away on the piano. "I've done that," she says, and then laughs. "I mean, I have wrung that one dry!" She became fixated on the idea of being a player; of recording an album not the way solo artists usually do—alone and sequestered, with the other stuff mixed in later—but as more of a collaboration. "I wanted to have a marriage with the instruments in a way that I never really have," she says. She wasn't entirely sure she was up to the challenge. "I know I can sit down at a piano and do a bit of up and down and boogie to the left and boogie to the right," she remembers thinking, "but could I hold my own with real players?"

The album was recorded in a converted barn in Cornwall, England, and to further instill the collaborative spirit, she and drummer Matt Chamberlain were set up in separate rooms, equipped with TV monitors so they could watch each other play. "He's on the TV, as far away as you are from me," she says. "His face—I can see him this close. And I'm playing and I'm looking at him...everything you're hearing is full takes. It was about a moment in time, and we played together for weeks to get those moments."

And it worked. *From the Choir Girl Hotel* is the sound of a risky artist taking even further risks. She seems to have given herself over in equal parts to her old idol Jimmy Page and her old pal Trent Reznor. Chamberlain's drums carry a dark undertow, and the snaky guitar endows the record with a languid, sexy mood. It's different enough from her old records to possibly attract a slightly wider audience, but esoteric and Tori-like enough for her devoted crew of obsessive fans.

Amos will turn 34 in August, and recently she's been thinking about the fact that she could very well be at the halfway point of her life. "That doesn't mean you have to go shopping at fucking Ralph Lauren," she says, "but it does mean that you are at a different stage. It's not good or bad. It's just it is." We've been sitting all this time in the lobby lounge of the Four Seasons Hotel, Amos's New York home away from home and a place where she greets the doormen by name. In a couple of weeks, her marriage to sound engineer Mark Howley will be announced. "It's a hard thing, growing up, and yet I think you can do it with grace," she says. "Whether I'm doing it or not, well, some days are better than others."

1997 ranking: 13 **Kim France**

AMOS: HUGH HALES TOOKE; HAIR: BERTA CAMAL; MAKEUP: TONY LUCHA; STYLIST: JOHN HULLUM. PROP STYLIST: JOHN ROBINSON.

tape is already an underground classic, but it's a mere sketch compared to his live somersaults, all done without headphones. Imagine Julia Child and Peter Sellers chasing each other through Q-Tip's basement... while it's on fire. *Carpal Tunnel Syndrome*, his first LP, is due in June. (S.F.J.)

6 | Beth Orton

A twentysomething folkie whose Powerbook is stained with café tears, Orton made two heart-starting Chemical Brothers cameos ("Alive



Alone," "Where Do I Begin"), then released her own heart-stopping album, *Trailer Park*—the post-rave hangover remedy of '97. Set for a September release, her follow-up album should be full of more classic singer/songwriter tunes drifting through virtual haze. (Charles Aaron)

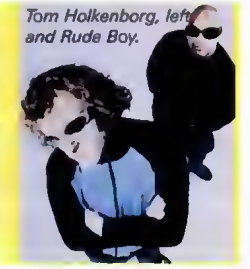
7 | Überzone

The fresh king of "funky breaks"—U.K. rave's most popular sound—Überzone jumbles electro beeps and jungle bass into the ultimate booty-quake. Check out tracks like "The Freaks" and his lead-into-gold remake of Sarah McLachlan's "Sweet Surrender," and bait your breath for his debut album, *Tomorrow Land*, due this summer on City of Angels. (Simon Reynolds)

8 | Catpower

Chan Marshall has got something she wants to say. But you'll have to move closer, because she's mumbling at the top of her lungs. Fond of turning inward on stage and aiming her songs off to the wings, she squeezes some memorable material into the narrow space that remains for confessional indie rock. Finally glimpsed in full effect on her upcoming second album, her voice is the shhhhh. (S.F.J.)





Tom Holkenborg, left, and Rude Boy.

9 | Junkie XL

These Dutch digital noisemakers want to be Prodigy so bad it hurts, though they're more likely to sample Hüsker Dü than Schoolly D. Wielding dumb-fun breakbeats and nonsensical calls to arms, these junior firestarters will change your pitch up with their new album, *Saturday Teenage Kick*. (Greg Milner)

10 | Natalie Imbruglia

With her sublime "Torn," this intense diarist came out of nowhere—well, *Neighbours*, an Australian soap opera—appearing to stare down romantic disappointment. In fact, she was "naked on the floor" of the house that Alanis built, meaning her debut, *Left of the Middle*, is already the business. (James Hunter)



Spy vs spy: *Tori Amos ties herself in knots.*



om left: James Iha, ly Corgan, D'Arcy.

18 The Smashing Pumpkins

Last boliday season, the Smashing Pumpkins contributed the song "Christmastime" to the *A Very Special Christmas 3* compilation. It was a piece of music to make you fall in love with them all over again. Billy Corgan's sleepless vocal, heartbreakingly alive to the differences between Christmas at age six and Christmas at age 30, carefully unspooled a ribbon of melody through minor-key harmonics given Mozart-like momentum by veteran producer/strings maestro Arif Mardin. "Toys for everyone," Corgan sang, as populist as Mariah Carey, as artistically fastidious as Neil Young. Appearing at the end of a year in which the petty battles surrounding the band—grunge versus punk, authenticity versus artifice—played like early-'90s nostalgia, the song seemed like some kind of summary response. Everything that ever made the Pumpkins a great rock band was there in abundance; what follows this month is simply the next stage. *Adore*, a new album that Corgan has downplayed as "arcane night music," looks wonderingly at the future—theirs and ours.
1997 ranking: 2 **(Hunter)**

19 Tricky

Anger and mourning, the hard way

Listen to this!" exclaims the artist presently known as Tricky, setting down his spliff and bounding excitedly across the living room of his Tribeca apartment to the stereo. "The lyrics are totally stupid! It's fucking wicked!" The 29-year-old pops a cassette into the tape deck and begins bobbing his shoulders manically as the music kicks in, the two dozen or so tiny gravity-defying dreads on the top of his head shaking like the fronds of the palm in the Island Records logo. Over the strains of Pleistocene guitar riffing and a funky, John Bonham–like beat, Neneh Cherry's spunky voice comes bubbling forth. The author of the song begins reciting the words along with the recording: "I wanna know if you'll try for me / I wanna know if you'll die for me / I wanna know if you'll take a chance / I wanna know if you'd like to dance." When the guitar comes barreling back in, Tricky cracks a smile so big his eyes scrunch up into narrow slits. "It'd be buge!" he gushes, picking up his joint again. "It's poptastic!"

Alas, the tune from the Cherry album, which was written and produced by Tricky—just one of the many projects be's worked on since the release of his second album, *Pre-Millennium Tension*, two years ago—won't get a chance to be buge, at least anytime soon. In fact, it probably won't ever come out, thanks to Cherry's handlers, who shelved the album for not being "poppy" enough. "They got scared," be recalls with a laugb. "They thought it sounded too much like me."

The "Tricky sound" that so frightened the Cherry camp has by now become a staple of the fin de siècle pop mainstream: warm, languorous beats mixed with cold-hearted vocal recriminations, a groggy vibe brimming with both romance and menace. The hip-hop nation's eccentric foreign-exchange student, Tricky makes music as complicated as he is: a mixed-race, self-described "mongrel" who eschews radio-friendly banalities in favor of obsessing on the struggles between light and darkness, good and evil, black and white, male and female. Sultry vocals from chanteuse Martina Topley-Bird (the mother of his two-and-a-half-year-old daughter Mazy) soar above the mix, while Tricky breathily mutters downbeat poetry—they're a Sonny and Cher for the End Times. Despite its hypnotic powers, however, Tricky's lurching bad-mood music bas yet to prove conducive to buge Stateside sales; evidently, he's too groove-oriented for the stadium floor, too lethargic for the dance floor, and too intense for the chill-out room. "I've always liked noises more than melody," he explains, putting down his joint to take a hit from his asthma inhaler. "My thing is, it ain't all about the Benjamins; it's all about my art."

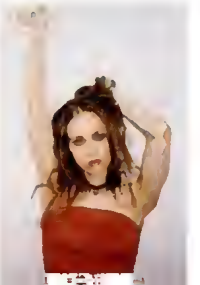
Such uncompromising spirit was on full display last winter when Tricky learned of remarks made by Eric Kronfeld, the president and COO of Polygram, Island's parent label. During a deposition for a lawsuit, Kronfeld stated that "If every African-American male in the United States was disqualified from pursuing a livelihood...because of a prior criminal record, then there would be no, or virtually no, African-American employees in our society or in our industry." Outraged, Tricky recorded his response in the form of a song, "Divine Comedy," which was quickly pressed and sent out to selected members of the media. "Every black man has a criminal conviction / How can you say that with conviction?" he hisses amidst the murk, before declaring "I wanna leave with Blackwell," a reference to Island Records founder Chris Blackwell, a close friend who acrimoniously departed the company in December. "I'd love to leave, but it's never gonna happen," says Tricky of his rift with the label. "Not unless they drop me, which I got over being scared of a long time ago." (Kronfeld himself left the company in March.)

Given such a salvo, it's no surprise that Tricky's upcoming album, *Angels With Dirty Faces*, is his angriest work yet. The leadoff single, the mournful "Broken Homes" (with PJ Harvey guesting on vocals), is a tribute to the Notorious B.I.G. Tricky wrote it the night he learned of Biggie's death—a mere two days, it happens, after Tricky had been asked to come up with a Biggie remix. The late Mr. Smalls also casts his prodigious sbadow over "6 Minutes," in which Tricky asserts that "All the tough guys are dropping like flies," as well as over the virulent "Record Companies," in which Tricky declares "Record companies love when they kill themselves / It boosts up the record sales / Now whicb one of you's gonna be the next niggy / You don't have to worry 'bout them / Tupac holding bands with Biggie." "It's fucking depressing," says Tricky of hip-hop's outbreak of bloodshed. "I don't see bow bulletproof vests and music coincide."

Besides winnowing down the track selection for the new album, Tricky has further crowded his already hectic schedule with the chores of running his own label, Durban Poison, whicb inked a distribution deal with DreamWorks last fall. In between signing a dozen acts, he's been putting the finishing touches on *Product of the Environment*, a sort of spoken-word album featuring some of Tricky's roughneck uncles spinning violent tales of the hard-knock life, and *Drunkenstein*, which Tricky describes as the historic first-ever collaboration between American and British rappers, to say nothing of his jam-packed dance card of collaborations, production jobs, and remix projects. It's been a dizzying ride from total obscurity to Nearly God, but Tricky perseveres by keeping his goals simple. "I just want to write good songs, like Bob Marley or Kurt Cobain," be says, readying another spliff. "That's my ambition, and I'm still not there yet."
1997 ranking: 20 **Mike Rubin**

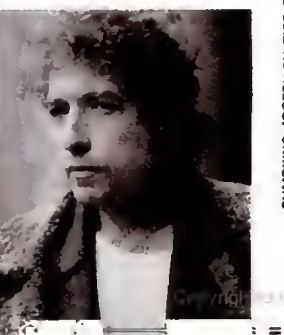
20 Fiona Apple

My whole thing last year was to convince the world that I didn't care what they thought about me," says Fiona Apple, rock's most fascinating work-in-progress. "And I guess it worked, because now I really don't." If the Apple we've been watching since her darkly wondrous debut, *Tidal*, has indeed been a false front, then perhaps we'd better brace ourselves for what's to come. In a year publicly defined by her MTV Video Music Awards acceptance rant, the mixed messages of her ubiquitous "Criminal" video, and her sometimes loopy interviews, the confidence and maturity of her bluesy, torch-like songwriting was often lost in the shuffle. "The writers do ask me about the songs," Apple says, "but when it comes out in the articles it's all rape and underwear and sex and bad boyfriends." Apple recently returned to the studio, but she's still not sure what direction her new album will take. "Part of the joy of making a record is figuring out who I am *now*," she says. On this day, at least, the poster girl for adolescent angst is downright bubbly, gushing over a new shipment of bandmade gifts from girl fans. "Much as I complain and whine in my songs—and I don't feel sorry for doing that—they also bring out reasons *not* to whine." *1997 ranking:* — **(Light)**



21 Bob Dylan

The evolution of a song is like a snake with a tail in its mouth," Bob Dylan once said. For evidence of this continuum, refer to 1997's *Time Out of Mind*: After spending most of the '90s immersing himself in traditional American musics, Dylan emerged with an album that masterfully confronted aging, loss, and flat-out heartbreak—music for grown-ups in a youth-obsessed marketplace. Thirty-six years ago, Dylan introduced himself to the world howling a Blind Lemon Jefferson song, so it's no accident that his long-awaited return to form was essentially a blues record. In *Stomping the Blues*, Albert Murray defined the music as "a statement about perseverance." That's a pretty good description of Dylan's career, particularly after he suffered a potentially fatal beart infection last year. In 1997, Dylan sat with presidents and popes, won three Grammys, and lcomed as a towering influence on young artists. Says rapper Wyclef Jean, who persuaded Dylan to make a brief cameo in his "Gone 'Til November" video, "He addresses social issues in a brilliantly subliminal way. I just think he's the bomb." *1997 ranking:* — **(Light)**



PUMPKINS: JOSEPH CULTICE; DYLAN: MARK SELIGER; APPLE: TERRY RICHARDSON; TRICKY: WENDY IDELE; HAIR: YUSUKE; MAKEUP: REBECCA FOR GARREN; STYLISTS: ADI GIL AND ANGE; DRESS BY J. CREW; NECKLACE BY MICHAEL MORRISON.



Nearly God: Tricky and his High Priestesses.



From left: Matt Freemen, Lars Frederiksen, Tim Armstrong, Brett Reed.

22 Rancid

Plotting a punky reggae party

Tim Armstrong once sang about punk-rock squats and dirt-cheap crash pads. Now the Rancid singer/guitarist is giving the grand tour of his Los Angeles dream house, a wooden two-story number built into a hill in the trendily shabby Silverlake neighborhood. We peer into the window of his basement home studio, in which the East L.A. *cholo*-core quartet Union 13 is translating some of his lyrics into Spanish for a future Rancid B side. The walls are plastered with graffiti: ANARCHY!, THE ANTI NOWHERE LEAGUE, VIVA LA HATE! There may be a looming contradiction between all the revolutionary sloganeering and the protected-by-armed-security NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH sign posted on the wooden geta outside the enclosed front patio, but nobody seems to mind.

Though Rancid are still officially based in the San Francisco Bay Area, Armstrong bought the home for the sake of convenience. Epitaph Records, Rancid's label, is right around the corner; the Epitaph subsidiary Hellcat, Armstrong's new imprint, is run from both L.A. addresses. He and the band—guitarist/vocalist Lars Frederiksen, bassist Matt Freeman, drummer Brett Reed—have been holed up in the house for the last few months, finishing the ambitious, two-CD follow-up to their flawlessly restless 1995 break-through...*And Out Come the Wolves*. That ranking-and-rolling white-ghetto missive kicked off the current ska-punk radio putsch, inadvertently filling the nation's frat houses with the kind of thick-necked ska-pop hacks who will now be Rancid's chief competition. "A lot of these bands were playing metal a couple of years ago," Freeman gripes before excusing himself with a stomachache.

Rancid's new set, tentatively titled *Life Won't Wait*, looks to be as much a departure from *Wolves* as *Wolves* was from their riddim-free first two albums. It may well even play *Sandinista!* to *Wolves*'s *London Calling*: The unmixed demo tape they played me reveals an ensemble refusing to stand still, shooting off in such new directions as funhouse-mirror dub darkness, skiffling twist-band be-bop-a-lula, Farfisa organs, horns, and sampling, aiming for beauty whether the songs concern love or murder. Frequently talked rather than sung, Armstrong's lyrics are less autobiographical, more world-historical and, occasionally, impenetrable. Even as the album struggles, you can't help but admire its exuberant ambition.

The inevitable Clash analogy doesn't bug Armstrong, by the way: "If we were baseball players, we wouldn't complain if you compared us to Willie Mays." And unlike their ska-lite progeny, Rancid are genuinely fluent in Caribbean music. The interview keeps getting sidetracked by debates about Eddy Grant and the Equals, and the band late last year finally fulfilled a longtime wish to record in Jamaica. "We created a whole new kind of music called 'Oi! reggae dancehall,'" Armstrong says of the new track "Jam Down," which features beats by Jamaican drummer/producer Sly Dunbar (of Sly & Robbie fame).

"When we showed up in Kingston in tattoos and tank tops, everybody was just really *curious*," recalls Frederiksen, a jolly Dane with spiky hedgehog hair and hird tattoos flying out of his shirt collar. "We were driving around with Buju Banton, blasting a tape of 'Jam Down' and getting a contact high from his big spliff. Suddenly the police pulled us over, and there we were, scared shitless because there were bags full of dope in the back. When we opened the doors all this smoke poured out like *Fast Times at Ridgemont High*.

"But then Buju says, 'Hey mon, these are my rock-band friends from America, and they just make this song.' He's like the mayor of Kingston, so when he played it for them, the cops just started dancing in the street!"

The band also swears by the Stax Records box set—"some of the best music by anybody ever," says Armstrong—which explains the Booker T. organs and boppy falsetto soul harmonies on "Backslide." His voice cracking like Shane McGowan's, he croons a heart-of-gold love hallad for his tall, red-haired new hride Brodie, who used to play with Australian grrrl-punkers Sourpuss. Reserved and frail-looking, the formerly Mohawked Armstrong now covers his spiderweb scalp tattoo with a hackward John Deere cap. Now 32, he says he wants to wait until he's 40 or so, then "stay at home and raise kids like John Lennon with Sean."

At the moment, though, his baby is Hellcat. "I used to tell [Epitaph president] Bret Gurewitz about all these young bands like Green Day and No Doubt, and they wound up getting huge. He said I should just start my own label," says Armstrong, though he still considers himself more of a fan than an entrepreneur. So far, all six Hellcat releases—including blue-collar bagpipe hruisers Dropkick Murphys, spirit-of-'76 sketehoard vigilantes U.S. Bombs, and teenage new-wavish skankers the Gadjits—show an enthusiastic knack for hookmaking and songwriting.

It makes poetic sense that Armstrong would turn to A&R outreach: Anybody who's studied his lyrics knows how well he reletes to kids who've got nowhere to go until music provides them a place. "You look at the back of [our second album] *Let's Go* and we look like murderers," Frederiksen says. But he and Armstrong are more likely to shout about loneliness and camaraderie than piss-off-and-die. When asked if any of his songs actually *are* angry, Armstrong ponders the question in silence for a minute before he finally settles on "Salvation." Rancid's first MTV hit, it details his early-'90s drug-rehab period, when he lived at the Salvation Army.

But in 1998, judging from their new home, Rancid live not unlike the kings they complain about in "Salvation." Parked in the living room, which is strewn with newlywed furniture and copies of *Elle* magazine, is a blue Vespa motor scooter. The vibe is suburban domestic bliss, and as Rancid's music expands beyond the purview of their old neighborhood, punk puritans will be sure to playa-hate. "It's like Catholics waiting to burn witches at the stake," Matt Freeman gripes. "Well, you know what?" Frederiksen adds. "None of our parents gave us the punk-rock handbook when we were born." *1997 ranking: 30* **(Eddy)**

JAMES SMOLKA

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Dirty blonde: Lil' Kim.

23 Björk

You know how *Homogenic* was kind of emotionally on 11?" asks Björk. "Well, the new record I'm working on is, like, minus one, like me tiptoeing and doing secret things that nobody knows." Actually, she's been doing that from day one. Since her stint as the giddy shriek mistress of Icelandic eccentrics the Sugarcubes (not to mention her previous incarnations as a childhood folk star and teenage performance-punk), Björk has established herself as the premier diva-from-Mars, channeling her magical love of extremes through some of earth's most visionary producers, including Tricky, the RZA, Howie B., and Nellee Hooper. Having recently finished a brief tour with Radiohead (backed by a string octet and electronics maestro Mark Bell), Björk has returned to her native Reykjavík, where's she's currently spending time with her son, partying with the high-concept dance outfit Gus Gus, and recording with Valgeir, "a boy with a humble little studio up on a hill." After four years on the U.K. fast track, Björk is definitely glad to be back with her homies. "London's gorgeous, like visiting another planet," she says. "But if you stay there too long you become an alien. My left arm got alien, and when my right arm and half my leg started morphing, I decided it was time to move back home."



1997 ranking: 19 **(Hermes)**

24 Rage Against the Machine



From left: Zack de la Rocha, Tim Bob, Tom Morello, Brad Wilk

In a musical landscape currently overrun by cheery pop froth, Rage Against the Machine still manage to make plenty of noise. In the two years since *Evil Empire*, the rap-metal provoceteurs have been intent on crashing both musical and political barriers. Rage raised mass awareness about death row prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal during their opening stint with U2's *PopMart*, introduced Middle America to the Wu-Tang Clan on a joint tour, and took on Guess? Jeans for alleged use of sweatshop labor in L.A. But do the kids get informed, or just get off on the aggression? "We must be doing something right," says guitarist Tom Morello, pointing to fan involvement with Rage-supported groups like the Leonard Peltier Defense Committee. "Over the past five years we've been pushing into unexplored territory about what activist rock'n'roll can be." As for new sonic territory, Rage contribute to the upcoming *Godzilla* soundtrack, plan to collaborate with Prodigy on a song or two, and will soon hit the studio to record a new album. "So far," Morello says, "all we know is that we're going to put the throttle down."

1997 ranking: 14 **(Berrett)**

25 Lil' Kim

From freaky mama to buttoned-down businesswoman

Spin: Why are you making a list of foods? Lil' Kim: I'm on a big diet, the kind where you have cereal with skim milk or just fruit until noon. I'd like to eat chicken fingers and french fries. But I can't. I just think of it as watching my nutrition. Does this have anything to do with Puff Daddy buying you an Ab Roller? No, I wanted to go on a diet for myself. Though he did tell me, "Kim, you're getting big." But he bought himself an Ab Roller, too. He just wants all of us to eat right and keep healthy. He's like our uncle. He's also my manager and he's producing my next album this summer. He's everything to me. But what other woman could pull off what you're wearing today [hot pants, stiletto boots, Gucci bra], especially one who's only 4'11"? When I saw you on the Puffy tour, standing onstage in a skimpy bikini and ordering men to lick your pussy even though you were a tiny bit chunky, I thought it was pretty cool. Well, it's not like people are upset about my body, but I think I could lose a few pounds for me. But I can't put longer legs on me. I can't make my skin lighter. I can just work with what I have. Sometimes when you're wearing one of your crazy outfits and a big green wig, it seems like you're actually trying to mess up the sex-symbol formula, putting your own twist on the image the Notorious B.I.G. gave you when you first came out. Yeah, I've definitely been doing that. When I wake up in the morning, I just do what I feel. Right now I'm just trying to stick to the blond whatever. But who knows what I'll do next? Now that you've really come into your own as an MC, does it bother you that you were once considered to be some completely manufactured diva? I did feel like I had something to prove, but it wasn't to where I couldn't take it anymore. I was just like, "They'll see." Another big lie is the rumor that Biggie wrote all my rhymes. He's not here anymore, so who do they think is doing it now? But it was very flattering for someone to think Biggie was writing for me because he's a dope MC who had seen the world. Is a Lil' Kim born or made? I was always feisty. I have an older brother, and when we were younger, I would beat him up. I'd grab him and be like, "Come on! Sit here! Do this! Come to my tea party!" One time I even made him bake me a cake in my little Easy-Bake Oven while I laid around watching TV. I'm still that same way. What does it mean to be "Queen Bee"? To me, it just means to be on top of your shit, be a strong woman. You're going to let a man know that the relationship is 50-50. I'm not into looks—I take a man because of his heart, his sweetness, his presence. Plus, I don't want someone who thinks he looks better than me. Is it true that "No licky-licky / No sticky-sticky"? I wouldn't kick someone out of bed because of it. But if that's my man and after a year he's not doing it, I might have something to say. Are you seeing anyone? No. I'm living the single life [laughs]. Biggie was my love. Once I live him down, then maybe a little later on I'll be able to date. I'm just focused on my career right now and my new label [Queen Bee Entertainment]. For these last few years I've hardly slept with anybody. That stuff I rap about is what I used to do four or five *years* ago—I've really been just chilling out lately. When I hear all these things about how I'm a ho and a slut and all that it kind of hurts me. I'm not even doing anything now! My friends tell me I make them sick because I never want to go anywhere. Someone once called you "the black Madonna." I love Madonna. I pattern myself after her sometimes, her look and some of her attitude. Like, whatever I want to do, I will do, and that's *that*. But she's a little wild, isn't she? But isn't the main message of both of your personas very similar—that liking sex and exploring your sexuality makes you powerful, not slutty? When I was out there on the streets with no man and nobody to care for me, that's different. But I'm not out there like that anymore. On *Hardcore*, I was saying things that I *used* to do. Sitting here with you, it seems like there's an enormous gap between Kim Jones and Lil' Kim. Lil' Kim just happened. When I first came out, I had a very good presence but I was really, really bad. I didn't know how to work the stage, I didn't know how to work the crowd, I didn't know how to work the mike. But the main reason why I wasn't [autobiographical] is that it wasn't in the marketing scheme right then. We were focusing more on separating me from other female rappers. But on my next album, I will be a little more intimate, much more mature. You always seem to have a male mentor—first Biggie, now Puffy. Do you feel like your image and your music are being manipulated and exploited by men? They used to be. But men take me a little bit more seriously now. When I interviewed Busta Rhymes, he said you were an "extremely sexy businesswoman." I'm going to prove that with my label. I want to show all the people out there that I've grown up a little and that I'm just as creative as the next guy out there. And make my money back.

1997 ranking: — **Sia Michel**

LIL' KIM: GUY AROCH; HAIR: IYESATA MARSH; MAKEUP: NZINGHA GUMBS; STYLIST: EDWARD JOWDY; DRESS BY VERSACE; BJÖRK: JOHN SCARISBRICK/ART DEPT.; RAGE: LISA JOHNSON



26 DJ Shadow

"We're trying to make music that represents the whole body of what we grew up listening to, but without sounding retro at all," says DJ Shadow, a.k.a Josh Davis, of his upcoming collaboration with Mo' Wax label poobah James Lavelle. All in a night's work for the 25-year-old sample surgeon who, with his early singles (recently collected on *Preemptive Strike*) and his '96 debut *Endtroducing . . .*, applied to hip-hop sound collage an expressive and syncretic ambition worthy of any modern composer. In his attempts to reform hip-hop, the San Francisco Bay Area–based "DJ savior" inadvertently birthed trip-hop and helped put the avant SoleSides and Mo' Wax labels on the map. Due for a summer release, his as-yet-untitled new record will be credited to U.N.K.L.E., an ongoing Lavelle project, which has a rotating cast. Among the vocal guests are Radiohead's Thom Yorke and the Verve's Richard Ashcroft. Does this, along with the clamorous psychedelic guitars on "High Noon," the most recent Shadow joint, portend a rock'n'roll conversion? "Last night I was listening to a Swans record," the DJ confides "My real love is still hip-hop. But at this point, I can respect anything that's honest, has soul to it, and sounds like it comes from the heart." *1997 ranking: 29* **(Hermes)**



28 Erykah Badu

Just as eccentric as she is Afrocentric, Erykah Badu has more sides than a used record shop: Southern belle, Nubian goddess, vegan earth mother, mystic schoolteacher, snap-queen soul diva. The mix is all her own, though the freestyle spirit is something she shares with Timbaland, OutKast, and other below-the-Mason-Dixon-line innovators. "Not being on the coasts, we don't have a systematic way of doing music," says the Texas native. "We're free to create our own path, which is what makes the art so diverse." After an early career as an MC went bust, Badu gave herself a chanteuse makeover with the multi-Platinum *Baduizm*, a set of jazzy, hip-hop–embossed R&B that smoldered on and on last summer. It was followed swiftly by *Erykah Badu Live*, which fattened the funk and introduced the hit single "Tyrone," a show-stopping send-off to a good-fo'-nuthin' man. *Baduizm* needs no translation, the singer believes, though its B-grrrl boosterism can prove relativistic: American audiences cheer on the song's reverse pimp-slap, but in Japan, where even minor relationship trouble is cause for shame, fans respond soberly. "It isn't funny to them, " Badu says. She'll be preaching to the converted when she hits the road with Lilith Fair this summer. *1997 ranking: —* **(Hermes)**

27 Sleater-Kinney

Rock thrives on both the margins and in the mainstream, but indie rock's worldview rarely extends beyond its own halogen-lit corner. Their peers may be too self-conscious to believe in their own transcendence, but not Sleater-Kinney, a Pacific Northwest trio that kicks the treble and swings the heartache like nothing you've ever heard. Over the course of three albums, they've forged a brutally direct sound much greater than the sum of their simple machines: the bric-a-brac interplay of guitarists Corin Tucker and Carrie Brownstein, the got-your-back vocals, and the anchors-aweigh drumming of Janet Weiss. Undeniably political, Sleater-Kinney's music doesn't merely illuminate what it's like to be female, or queer—it articulates what it's like to be anyone swept up in music. When Corin Tucker sang that she needed "words and guitar" on last year's *Dig Me Out*, you knew she'd find what she was looking for. "I like that they're women who shove things in people's faces," says Ur-grrrl Joan Jett. Punk because it's so raw, postpunk because it's so tender, Sleater-Kinney's music stakes out its own territory but still manages to welcome the rest of the world *1997 ranking: 35* **Greg Milner**



29 Elliott Smith

He may be too hard-working to be a classic slacker, but singer/songwriter Elliott Smith is the ranking poet of the Whatever. "I don't usually know what I'm trying to do," Smith says "Eventually you look at your songs and go, 'Oh, this is how that fits.' But first you just sort of dream it." His plaintive, complex pop tunes shine even in comparison to the melodic lift of Ron Sexsmith and the sonic intelligence of Duncan Sheik Smith grew increasingly polished over three indie releases, culminating in last year's so aptly named *Either/Or*. But Smith began to really make his name when several songs from that album appeared on the *Good Will Hunting* soundtrack. One such tune, "Miss Misery" was even nominated for an Oscar ("Best Original Song"), and Smith will release a new record on DreamWorks this fall. Still, Smith is hesitant to admit that his audience just might be expanding. "I don't feel like I'm becoming a pop star. But, I mean, who knows?" *1997 ranking: —* **(Hunter)**



DJ SHADOW: MICHAEL LEWIS. SLEATER-KINNEY: ASHKAN SAHIHI; SMITH: DANNY CLINCH; BADU: ERIC JOHNSON/OUTLINE.

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30 Roni Size

Among the perpetual onslaught of DJ music makers, U.K. jungle futurist Roni Size stands out not only as a turntable guru but as something a little more old-fashioned. "I'm a producer," he declares. "Someday I'd like to work with Quincy Jones or Nellee Hooper—just go to school and see what happens." This orientation is obvious on *New Forms*, a drum'n'bass milestone in which woody double-bass lines and fleet, jazzy live drumming get equal time with digital frippery, thanks to the DJs, MCs, and players in the Bristol-based Reprazent collective. The record scored vision points (and Britain's coveted Mercury Prize) for blending drum'n'bass abstractions with avant song structures, a blueprint Size plans to bring to his next production project, the debut of a young diva named Leone. Aside from a track with Redman and remixes for Sarah McLachlan and U2, Size will stick to his world-class instrumentals ("maybe a few James Brown whoops, that's all") and to swelling sound systems via the club-minded V label. "We're getting loads of offers," he says. "But we're being selective. We're just trying to follow our guiding light." *1997 ranking:* — **(Hermes)**





Belle and Sebastian's Stuart Murdoch

31 Belle and Sebastian

Belle and Sebastian are indie rock's most notorious shrinking violets. They refuse to be photographed, shun reporters, and rarely perform in public. Even becoming a band at all was something of an accident for the Scottish collective. Each year, Alan Rankine, a onetime member of '80s popsters the Associates, shows his music business class at Glasgow's Stowe College how to produce and market a record. In 1996, the class picked a demo tape by shy singer/guitarist Stuart Murdoch, impressed both by his meticulously arranged, slyly funny pop tunes, and his ethereal, Nick Drake–like voice. "The strength of the songs just pissed on everything from a great height!" raves Rankine. A surprised Murdoch cobbled some musician friends together and recorded the acclaimed *Tigermilk* EP. "We thought it was okay," says drummer Richard Colburn. "Then record companies and fans started calling and we thought, My God, what have we done?" They signed with The Enclave label, which folded soon after the release of the excellent *If You're Feeling Sinister*. A new record will be released by Matador this summer, but the band is still devising ways to confound the public. "I'm going to suggest something daft like touring the world's Holiday Inns," says Rankine, still a band confidante. "That ought to keep them occupied." *1997 ranking:* — **(Milner)**

32 Alec Empire

Down with periods! Alec Empire wants exclamation points! Now!! "Fuck all! Fuck all! Fuck all!" he and his band, Atari Teenage Riot, shout in a song creatively titled "Fuck All!" Empire says his lyrics are "more like statements"—the kind that hit you over the head as hard as ATR's furious electropunk does. "There's so much stuff out there nowadays that you have to make a lot of noise to be heard," he says. "All this information puts people in a trance." Alec is not nicknamed Empire for nothing: The Berlin-born DJ/producer/label magnate runs both Digital Hardcore Recordings, which releases ATR, Shizuo, and other jarring Germans, and the new Geist label, a forum for his prolific solo work. Last summer, ATR completed an opening slot on the beleaguered Rage Against the Machine/Wu-Tang Clan tour. And Empire recently negotiated a new U.S. distribution deal for his labels with Elektra. "We are not the kind of persons," says Empire, "who sit behind the computer their whole life and are totally bored and have no girlfriends." The way he makes those gadgets scream you know he's rock'n'roll! *1997 ranking:* — **Sarah Vowell**



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Looks better in glasses: Pulp's Jarvis Cocker.

33 Pulp

Droll, self-mocking anthems for Britpop's morning after

Pulp's Jarvis Cocker poses so gently you almost believe him completely. A lank streak of pseudo-suave, he says hello with a quizzical "All right, then" and wafts across his New York hotel room like a French existential gangster. Turned out in '70s cast-off chic—brown jacket, brown shoes, brown polyester shirt and pants—he's a pop star out of time, a working-class wit who treats his morning shave like a curtain call for last night's indiscretions.

At least that's the shtick. But underneath, particularly on the 1995 career-defining album *Different Class* (which went quadruple-Platinum in England), Pulp's glam-pop ditties suddenly seethed with up-to-date contempt—not just for the class-climbing morons who perpetuate bourgeois morality or the class-slumming phonies who act like they're above it but for his own puppy-dog attachment to the whole charade. He insists on taking us backstage *during* the show, yanking back the pop-star scrim and revealing every sordid seam. See, it's fun up here, he confesses, but only because it's so *pathetic*. "This is the eye of the storm / It's what men in stained raincoats pay for," he whispers conspiratorially on the lounge-shuffling Britpop requiem, "This Is Hardcore," the title track of Pulp's latest album. Then his croon spits tacks, like Eartha Kitt's "Après Moi" for the socially myopic: "That goes in there / And that goes in there / And that goes in there / And that goes in there /Aww, and then it's *ov-uh*."

"I don't know why I'm so ungrateful, really," says Cocker, 34, of his long-awaited success and semi-fame after Pulp's 15 years (and five albums) of making Roxy Music for swinging losers. "Maybe it's because my generation, which came up on punk, had never been deemed worthy of much notice before. We left school and drifted around in anonymity [Cocker studied film at St. Martin's School of Art in London]. Then people in the indie/alternative scene started getting invited to openings and premieres, and even though it's full of shit, you go. The trouble is, there's no final reward, you're just tricked into thinking you're getting somewhere.

"Like when I went to this Versace and Elton John party, so you thought you were at an exclusive thing, right? But then there was a VIP area and another level after that and another level after that and another level after that, and, finally, at the end of the night, you find yourself alone in a brightly lit closet with Simon LeBon eating off a paper plate! That's the celebrity inner sanctum. The further up these levels you go, the worse it gets, honestly. All people were doing at the Versace party was traveling up and down in a glass lift so everybody could view them."

Like Sandra Bernhard's tawdry younger brother, Cocker has an ironic yet implicated eye for celebrity's pros and cons; he doesn't consider himself above it all. Unlike, say, Courtney Love, who cutely claims she's only "spying" on the rich and famous.

"I was never that dispassionate about it, and I don't think she is either," says Cocker. "When you're in it, you're in it. Be honest. You *are* this sort of self-obsessed, frightened creature huddling with other self-obsessed, frightened creatures in a pack at these private clubs where 'ordinary' people aren't allowed in, talking about how terrible it is that you can't go to 'ordinary' places anymore."

But didn't the recognition boost your self-esteem, at least momentarily?

"My self-esteem was never lower," replies Cocker. He places an index finger of Grinch-like proportions against his cheek; his dense lenses reflect a bag of pretzels. "My main failing as a 'star' is that I just can't seem to recognize a good time," he concludes glumly. "I really need somebody to point one out to me."

Britpop was a bacchanal Americans glimpsed through a passing Virgin Atlantic window seat; then it was gone before we even knew the difference between a "punter" and a "lager lout." Now, Oasis and Blur seem like doddering anachronisms, while post-Britpop spokesblokes the Verve and Radiohead sing very sadly about how everyone acted very badly (the drugs don't work; the Karma Police live inside of my head). "It *was* a hit of a party, but I think we can all agree that it's most definitely over," says Cocker diplomatically. "At a certain point the party peaks and nobody can remember what they're celebrating anymore; that's when you get casualties."

Pulp aren't casualties, but do they still mean anything? Cocker's two moments of cultural resonance—the defiantly wounded anthem "Common People" and the clumsily inspired mooning of Michael Jackson at the Brit Awards (Britain's Grammys)—occurred more than two years ago. Meanwhile, *Trainspotting*'s heroin-on-a-housing-estate picaresque emerged as the defining narrative for European youth, brushing aside Pulp's acutely detailed psychodramas (which were more specific to their home of Sheffield, a "shit steel town" 200 miles north of London). Plus, *Different Class* translated into zilch on the U.S. charts, and guitarist/violinist Russell Senior bolted the group, terming it no longer "cool."

However, on *This Is Hardcore*'s baroque ballads, Cocker seems relevant anew, unveiling himself not as a youthful sympathizer but as the baby boom's dirty conscience. Before, his truth was a cheeky, brandy-wet secret urgently whispered in the ear of another man's wife. Now, it's the sound of monkeys building a house on his back ("The Fear") or a rueful postcard to a younger lover who reminds him of an older lover he once exploited and lost ("Sylvia"). The album's best songs lurch along melodramatically, with Cocker grasping for something like repose as his handmates—keyboardist Candida Doyle, guitarist Mark Webber, bassist Steve Mackey, drummer Nick Banks—muck around with theremin, vibes, strings, and horns. The result often sounds like a defrocked Ziggy Stardust wandering forlornly around a deserted Village Green.

"I realized that I couldn't write songs like a snotty outsider kid, if I was going to be honest at all with myself," Cocker says rather coyly. "So now I'm going on about how much I *totally adore* 18-year-old supermodels with eating disorders."

In the film *Mrs. Parker and the Vicious Circle*, Jennifer Jason Leigh (as Dorothy Parker) opines of her writing plight: "What a thing to be doing at my age...making up stories about broken-hearted sissies." At an age when he admittedly should be "losing it, stopping it, or latching it on to something," Jarvis Cocker has contemplated similar questions, especially since the end of Pulp's '96 world tour.

"Nobody wants to admit they're growing old, or give up the luxury of youth, the *irresponsibility*," he says now. "But how are we supposed to grow old and not become embarrassing or abysmally boring? Do we all have to become Phil Collins? Or learn how to samba and purchase South American crafts? I think it's our evolutionary *duty* to come up with an alternative adulthood that's got some dignity, but is still a bit lively."

This Is Hardcore's characters squirm and wrestle with this predicament. On the domestic vignette, "Dishes," Cocker rejects a tempting martyr complex and passionately declares: "I'm not worried that I will never touch the stars / Because stars belong up in heaven / And the earth is where we are." The album's centerpiece is the wry, aching ballad "Help the Aged" and its tour-de-force video, which features the band performing in what appears to be Cocker's version of the Playboy Mansion, where bearded coots play Ping-Pong with voluptuous courtesans. Over a cocktail-piano melody that surges into a midlife crisis of guitars, violins, and electronics, Cocker genuinely pleads the elderly's case: "If you look very hard behind those lines upon their face / You may see where you are headed / And it's such a lonely place." But soon you realize that Jarvis the Britpop Lestat is simply vamping it up for some young blood. In the video, he's riding a motorized wheelchair upstairs, and you can bet his noontime feeding involves more than chicken soup.

When questioned about such shenanigans, Cocker quickly drops into *Austin Powers* mode, remarking with more than a slight leer, "You know, a real program to help the aged would be to give them all young people to shag, now wouldn't it?"

1997 ranking: 26

Charles Aaron

NICK WAPLINGTON


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From left: Butch Vig, Duke Erikson, Shirley Manson, Steve Marker.

34 Garbage

In the summer of '95, Butch Vig built a bridge between distorto-rock and electronic swing. Shirley Manson shimmied across it, promising to tear our little world apart. She was only happy when it rained. But three years have passed and the bridge is now sagging with wannabes like Transister and Sneaker Pimps. Meanwhile, Manson has morphed from hired glamour-gun into a piss-taking fixture on the icon circuit. So it's anyone's guess what will happen with the upcoming *Version 2.0*, the product of more than a year in the studio. Half the Western world seems to drip into the obsessive crew's strange brew: While Manson now grooves to Photek and Sleater-Kinney, Vig handcrafts shadow samples that could be Chrissie Hynde or Brian Wilson...but aren't. Think of Garbage as houseboys'n'girl of a Disco Versailles, maniacally polishing every surface as they boogie through the palace. Will they emerge to find themselves overtaken by pop-cult amnesia? "I'm sure there are millions who've forgotten us, but it's not something we worry about," says Manson. And if *Version 2.0* is a Hall of Mirrors, a slated 18-month tour should haul her theory-funking crew back into the light. *1997 ranking: 17* **(Dark)**

35 Busta Rhymes

There are many super freaks in history, but very few Space Oddities. Much more than the sum of their bugged-out personae and musical tomorrowlands, Super Freaks have their own cosmology—always futuristic, usually unreadable, but somehow strangely profound. Navigating the same Mothership as Sun Ra and George Clinton, Busta Rhymes, he of the silver space suits, acid freak-out videos, and careening warp-speed flows, is hip-bop's most cuddly Space Oddity, and the kind of MC that makes everyone else look like a musical-guest-on-*Jenny-Jones* chump. Other rappers drone on about the New World Order, but Busta embodied it in 1997's cryptic *When Disaster Strikes*. "I knew that in coming days some powerful events were going to occur," Busta says, "and then we lost people like Versace, Diana, Biggie. Not that I'm a psychic reader, but keep in tune and you can put your two's and two's together." On his next album, the tentatively titled *The Final World Front*, (out this fall), Busta will purportedly prepare us for the "mind changes" of the year 2000. "It's the end of the 21st century and the procrastination stages are over—you've got to deal with the 22nd century, ready or not." Um, but isn't it, ahem, actually the end of the *20th* century? "Well, I'm a 22nd-century kind of nigga." *2197 ranking:* — **(Michel)**





Richard Ashcroft of the Verve.

36 The Verve

With the stately anthem "Bitter Sweet Symphony," the Verve ride a wave of schizophrenia into the *Spin* Top 40. Brit crits like to chat up the band's artfulness, their roots in Velvet Underground–style swirl ("The Drugs Don't Work"). Stateside, we know them best for the slick Nike commercial that sells "Symphony"'s majestic bummer as inspirational power ballad. *Urban Hymns*, their third album, is lovable for much more. But there's no denying that it enjoyed a chart renaissance after the advert aired—a little lesson in love, American style. Apparently "Bitter Sweet"'s anchor sample—the Andrew Oldham Orchestra's cover of the Rolling Stones song "The Last Time"—was much in demand. The Verve, who don't own the rights, got pinched—do they license their version or wait for some evil empire to purchase the original? "Our worst fear," says band manager Jazz Summers, "was that Burger King would get ahold of it, and our song would be sizzling behind some horrible lump of meat on every television in the world." Poor darlings, walking pop music's famously crooked line between art and commerce, the Velvets and Nike: Lougazing and shoegazing, indeed. *1997 ranking:* — **(Dark)**

37 Phish

At a time when one-hit wonders rule the radio, Phish are scoring a victory for the viability of long-term band careers. Spawned 15 years ago, the quirky, musically erudite Vermont foursome has slowly established itself as the premier jam-band of the post–Jerry Garcia era—without the benefit of a radio single, a hit album, or critical acclaim (unless Ben & Jerry's "Phish Food" ice cream counts). "The world had very little to do with making us," says guitarist Trey Anastasio, "so it really can't take anything away from us." A grassroots phenomenon that sold out three New Year's '98 shows at Madison Square Garden, Phish finally charted with their eighth album, 1997's *Slip Stitch and Pass*. "We haven't burst into the mainstream; we kind of plodded into it," Anastasio says. That approach allows for maximum artistic freedom; a Phish set might range from orchestral, Zappa-esque fusion pop to a spot-on reading of the Talking Heads' *Remain in Light*—in its entirety. But it's still just hippies at those shows, right? "The idea that people are coming to see us because they're into the Dead is a load of shit," says Anastasio. "If the music isn't moving people they won't come back." *1997 ranking:* — **James Rotondi**



From left: Trey Anastasio, Jon Fishman, Page McConnell, Mike Gordon.

GARBAGE: STEPHANE SEDNAOUI; ASHCROFT: CHRIS FLOYD; PHISH: DANNY CLINCH; RHYMES: JILL GREENBERG.

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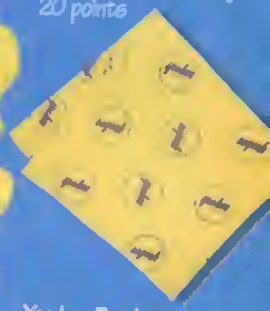
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Jean Benoit Dunckel, left, and Nicolas Godin.

39 Air

In uncertain times, an idealized past and an idealized future are equally alluring. Take, for instance, the French duo Air, whose sinuous electro-ambient sound eches with nostalgia but still seems to flow like time slipping-slipping-slipping into the future. On records like 1997's acclaimed *Premiers Symptômes* EP, Nicolas Godin and Jean Benoit Dunckel delicetely combine vintage and modern electronics with acoustic instruments, concocting mood musique best experienced in the dead of night. "The good ideas always happen in the evening; the morning is good for rehearsing—or making love," Godin seys with Pepè le Pew flair. Air are often lumped in with French club scene stalwarts like Daft Punk and the Source crew, but their music isn't really made for the dance floor *or* the chill-out room. The duo's recent *Moon Safari* LP evokes e strange, futuristic utopie in which people breathe sounds instead of air. In fact, the early single "J'ai Dormi Sous L'eau (I Slept Underwater)" was inspired by e comic about an aquatic society that Godin read as a boy. "When you are in the studio, it's the same thing," he seys. "You're encased in big bubbles of equipment, like a submarine, and you think nothing can happen to you."
1997 ranking: — **(Milner)**

39 Korn

Listening to Korn is like trying to figure out what you love about a roller-coaster ride: the ordered climb or the cheotic free-fall; the fear of impending danger or the release of fear itself. "We blew the door open for heavy music in 1994," says confident vocalist Jonathan Davis. "And our new album," due out this summer, "is even heavier. Dancier. There's e deeper groove. We've taken advantage of technology."

Threet or promise, metal experimentalists Korn have spent the past four years readying for their inevitable breakthrough: two Platinum records, e Grammy nomination, a headlining spot on last year's Lollapalooza tour, and their own record label (Elementree) on which they will be "pimping" out some "bad-ass shit." Not since Rage Against the Machine declared "Fuck you / I won't do what you tell me" has a band issued anthemic ultimatums and received such undying devotion in return, genereting the kind of loyalty that would make the Heaven's Gate guy jealous. So it's with equal parts ambition and bravado that the Bakersfield, California, natives are planning this fall's "Family Values Tour," an arena extravaganze of Lilithian proportion complete with break-dancing crews, fire-eaters, and like-minded musical brutes Orgy and Limp Bizkit. "'Palooza was pretty fucking stale," seys Davis. "We wanted to do a festival of up-and-coming harder-edge bands, because we don't get e chance to be heard, really." While Korn may be e household name among the aggro set, they've been virtually ignored by the mainstream press, radio, and MTV. Look for the children of the Korn to enjoy the last leugh
1997 ranking: — **Victoria DeSilverio**



40 Ben Folds Five

The piano man moves from indie culthood to those nice black turtlenecks

Spin: Are you ready to breek out the champagne now that—after playing smell-clubs for a decade—*Whatever and Ever Amen*, your second album, has gone Gold? Ben Folds: I don't even know—I've been on vecation in Australie. It was pretty cool to come back and have a couple of pleques. I'm just trying to decide what I want to do next. Isn't that decision already made? Hasn't your hit single "Bnck" made you a burgeoning pop star, turtlenecked behind a piano bench in your video, an unslick heir to Elton John and Billy Joel? That's what I'm trying to think about now. Everyone's got their calling about whet they're supposed to do, but I can't tell if thet's what *I'm* supposed to do—or if I heve e choice. Do I let people down and go score independent films? Can I do that? You could. Don't you like performing? Yeah, I do. And then I hate it. It feels like you're pursuing e political career out there on the road. Like you're going out and gamering support somehow. There must be benefits from waging that campaign. I make a living. And I've alweys felt et home with a bit of a leadership thing going on. Ben Folds, student council president? No, I was never into stuff like that. But I usually end up the king of my own little room. People picture you sitting there, jamming Cole Porter and Irving Berlin, nght? I probably couldn't name five pieces of music by either. I appreciate the form and craft of that stuff, but it's never been something I sat down and listened to. What did you listen to as a kid? I grew up in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, and my fether restored houses. A lot of times he worked on rental properties in the bad section of town. At the end of the month, people would just fucking leeve—they'd be, like, *gone*. There'd be no furniture, but e bunch of records would be laying on the floor. Inevitably, they'd be Otis Redding, Wilson Pickett, James Brown, Sam and Dave, Ike and Tina Turner. That is all I ever heard, plus some more modern stuff, like Earth, Wind and Fire and Sly Stone. No Jerry Lee Lewis? Maybe it's a generational thing, but when people would give me one of his singles, I'd say, "Well, that's okay. But 'Gratitude' by Earth, Wind and Fire kicks my ass." Your own music isn't R&B-slick. I imply a lot of bass, drums, guitar, and other kinds of loud instruments when I sit down et the piano. I tend to create a lot of noise with my left hand—technically wrong notes, not harmonically correct. Do you always wear a turtleneck when you play? No, I hate 'em. I've never worn a turtleneck, except for that "Brick" video. They feel like shit.
1997 ranking: — **(Hunter)**

From left: Robert Sledge, Darren Jessee, Ben Folds.



AIR: NICOLAS HIDIROGLOU; BEN FOLDS FIVE: JEFF REIDEL; KORN: CHRIS CUFFARO.



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Headgear: A drill (like the Flexshaft pictured here) is used to create a hole in the skull. Peter Halvorson, opposite, who was trepanned more than 20 years ago, says he has the "permanent creative brain metabolism" of a 16 year old.

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A Hole in the Head

Say the adventurous: Drilling through your cranium allows you to live in a state of refined consciousness. Say the neurosurgeons: That's pretty stupid. **Susan Perry** explores the extreme in self-betterment: **trepanation**
Photographs by **David Barry**



Matt, a 24-year-old fledgling writer/director of film and recent graduate of Tulane Business School, is trying to get focused. While jumping through the flaming hoops of the film industry circus, he's administering an assortment of self-help methods to keep him centered on his goals. *Awaken the Giant Within* by Anthony Robbins and *Maximum Achievement* by Brian Tracy were instructive, as was the Dalai Lama's autobiography. Meditation, yoga, reading Tibetan Buddhist texts, and a hearty share of recreational drug use have all been beneficial. Still, Matt has yet to crack the code. And so, in what may be the ultimate rite of passage to self-betterment, Matt is considering having his head trepanned, which means drilling a hole through his skull.

"I feel like trepanation is very Zen," Mett says, kneading the scruff on his chin, cocking his handsome, as-yet-unscathed head to one side. "It opens up your subconscious mind, making you better creatively, like when you were a child. I've heard from people who've done it that it's like meditating three times a day without having to meditate, getting you really clear and focused."

Matt is not alone in his fascination with this unusual, distinctly illegal approach to body modification. A small group of twenty- and thirtysomething people are expressing a renewed interest in the practice of trepanation, which has been around since Neolithic times and was recognized as sound medicine well into the 16th century. Trepanning, which denotes cutting into the cranium, but not the brain or membrane protecting the brain (thus differing from a lobotomy, another once-voguish alternative treatment), was formerly used as a corrective for epilepsy, convulsions, and insanity. It was also considered a cure-all for headeches by releasing the evil spirits assumed to be causing the pain.

Some 30 years ago, John Lennon is said to have asked Paul and Linda McCartney, "You fancy getting the trepanning thing done?" Since then, this radical practice has been an obsession of fringe culture, spurred most recently by references in a number of zines and Internet sites. Last year, filmmaker Bernardo Bertolucci, upon viewing a 28-year-old documentary of a radiant, blood-drenched woman trepanning herself with e power drill, was so impressed by what he referred to as this "beautiful poem" that he offered to help get the film shown on this year's film festival circuit. This spring, two retrospective TV documentaries on trepanation, *A Hole in the Head* and *Beyond Bizarre*, are scheduled to be aired.

"There's relaxing," explains Feilding, "and at the same time an increasing of energy. It remains the same brain, the same intelligence and personality. You just have it functioning at a slightly higher level."

The numbers of those who have a more personal interest in having their skulls aerated are growing as well. "I've had dozens of painful operations. I've been confirmed dead twice," says Tom, referring to a boating accident that kept him in and out of hospitals for years. "Removing a piece of bone from the skull is like child's play for me." Tom, president of an Internet service provider living with his wife in Pennsylvania, deems his impending trepanation the salve not only for his medical wounds but for all of life's wounds. "It's about regaining your youth. If people understood it better they would agree," says Tom. "I guess they've watched too many horror movies where someone drives a corkscrew through someone else's brain."

At 39, Tom says his life has been stagnant long enough, that he is primed for the operation because he, like Matt, is ready to live his to its fullest potential.



The happy couple: Lord James Neidpath, left, who traveled to Cairo to be trepanned, and his wife, Amanda Feilding, who performed a self-trepanation in her bathroom with a power drill.

Inside a damp, drafty Oxford, England hunting lodge surrounded by three moats near the edge of a moor, Amanda Feilding is speaking tenderly of Birdie, her deceased pet pigeon. Birdie was present during Feilding's remarkable self-trepanation, which she documented in *Heartbeat in the Brain*, the film unearthed by Bertolucci. "I found this fledgling pigeon when he was a week old," says Feilding. "I beceme his mother and then his mate. We hed a very pessionete reletionship. For me he was the emblem of expanded consciousness end of the Holy Ghost. He was like being e part of the cosmic orgasm. And so, I wanted to make a film that flew on the wings of Birdie."

When speaking of Birdie or another of her favorite subjects, "psychovitamins" (a term she uses for an array of ingestibles others might classify as illegal substances), Feilding continually reveals herself to be e nonconformist of the highest order. Of her trepanation, Feilding says, "There wes a feeling of dread. But no more than doing a difficult ski jump or a dangerous mount onto a horse. Obviously, it's an unnatural thing to do one Sundey afternoon. One always has a disinclination to trepan oneself."

On thet Sunday afternoon nearly three decades ago, Feilding hung an electric drill with a flexible drive from the ceiling of her bathroom (to make it lighter and eesier to control). "During the actual trepanation there was no pain," she says calmly. "I'd injected a local anesthetic into the skin, and there are no nerve endings in the skull. I was sitting in front of a mirror with glasses on to keep the blood from going in my eyes. There was some spurting, but mostly a running-down sort of thing. Birdie was with me and there was beautiful music playing, Mozart, I think. It was all rather English and restrained."

During the drilling, which lasted about a half hour, Feilding lost approximately one-and-a-half pints of blood. "I was drilling away, and there was a paranoia thinking I wouldn't know when I'd gotten through. And then suddenly I knew because there was no more resistance."

After the trepanation, Feilding wrapped a turban around her freshly bathed head, with its new seven millimeter hole (about the width of a straw). She went for a celebratory steak dinner and then a party with friends. It was four hours after the drilling that the desired effect was first felt. "It was rather like a tide coming in, a buoyancy," says Feilding, "and a silence in my head for the first time."

Feilding, now 54, is married to Lord James Neidpath, a former Oxford University professor of international relations who tutored Bill Clinton in 1970. Two yeers ago, Feilding end Neidpath traveled to Egypt, searching Cairo's insane asylums for a neurosurgeon who would agree to drill a hole in Neidpeth's skull. (As in the West, trepanation there is an illegal procedure.) The operation lasted ten minutes. Neidpath remembers the resounding cracking sound after a drill made the initial skull perforation; e can opener–like implement wes then used to enlarge the hole by breeking off bits of bone. Eight stitches and $2,500 later, he left the hospital feeling perky and elert, a benefit Neidpath says has endured and was in

limited supply before his skull was pierced.

Currently, the couple is occupied with writing e book together on the history of expanded consciousness, raising four children, end continually discovering new facets of each other.

"Why don't you just be really dering and touch it?" Neidpath esks his wife, guiding her finger to the small crater at the crown of his head thet now has a thick layer of skin stretched over it.

"You know I never heve," she reveals. Pause. "God, it's enormous." Another peuse, still probing. "My God."

"You've not done that before?" Neidpath inquires.

"I never did. No."

"Now you know."

"Wow. That is something."

"It makes it more fun, doesn't it," whispers Neidpath, "shoving your finger in there?"

Trepanners consider their modified physiology to be the remedy to gravity's unfortunate limitation on adult humans. Gravity, they claim, robs the brain of blood. This concept, ascribed to by the handful of people who are known to have been trepanned in the last three decades, was developed in Amsterdam in 1962 by Bart Huges, a reputedly brillient young scientist whose views continue to hold powerful sway over his followers. His doctrine, referred to as the "mechanism of brain blood volume," was arrived at after several years of scientific research, many hallucinogenic trips taken, and a bucketful of his own blood squendered. (Huges hes said that his self-trepanation lested only 45 minutes but that it took four hours to clean the blood from the walls end ceiling.)

According to Huges, increasing the quantity of blood in the cranium will create a permanent high. "We are all living under the yoke of gravity's dreg," he declered during e 1966 interview in the *Transatlantic Review*. "Gravity is the enemy. The edult is its victim. Society is its disease." Huges, who is the euthor of *Trepanation: The Cure for Psychosis*, claimed the devolution of humankind was caused by the edoption of the upright stance—the price paid for bipedal motion and the opposable thumb was loss of blood to the brain. The brain is nourished by oxygen and sugar, both supplied by blood. By reducing the amount of blood received, the brain, according to this doctrine, becomes nutrient-deficient and its range of consciousness is proportionally diminished. Youngsters, until around the age of 18, are not so deprived, reasons Huges; babies are bom with their skulls unsealed, so the blood flows directly from their hearts to their breins, allowing for a creetivity that most sealed-skull adults lack. Short of standing on one's head around the clock, taking successive hot and cold showers, or continuously dropping acid, Huges maintains that creating an opening in one's skull is the only way to forever defy the limiting forces of nature.

"The purpose of having a hole in your head," says Feilding, "is to allow the membranes thet surround the brain to expand, which occurs on the heartbeat. In order to have adequate pulsation in the brain, it must be against an expandable surface. The extra pulse from the hole exerts pressure on the fluid in the brain, which is a lake of cerebral spinal fluid, until some of it is pressed out end replaced by blood. This forms a new ratio between the two fluid volumes, whereby you have permanently more blood and less cerebral spinal fluid so that there's e restoration to the level of childhood."

Feilding believes the heightened consciousness resulting from trepanation—the subtly felt high that, she asserts, we are all seeking on some level (i.e., from driving fast, getting drunk, heving obsessive romances, and so on)—is a "freebie" life advantage not to be missed. "There's a relaxing," she says, "end at the same time an increasing of energy. It remains the same brain, the same intelligence and personality. You just have it functioning at a slightly higher level."

Joe Mellen, Feilding's ex-husband, is a publisher and art dealer who became so convinced by trepanation lore that he attempted to trepan himself on severel separate occasions during the '60s. On the first try, he used a corkscrew-like hand drill that Feilding attempted to strong-arm into his skull (a task described as Herculean by trepanners and neurosurgeons alike). On the third try, using en electric drill, he succeeded. Living in London with his recently trepanned wife, Jenny, and their infant son, Mellen wrote a song on the subject of "gravity's dreg" titled "The Great Brein Robbery." The gist of this mantra-like ode is expressed in its lest line: "All the preyers won't save your soul / Adult, you need a hole."

"It is essential that everyone knows how to restore blood to their brain," says Feilding. She believes this to be information so invaluable to the general public thet she ren for Parliement in the mid-'70s on a platform of trepanation as national health policy. Though no political progress was made, Feilding maintains a steadfast devotion to the cause. Today, she accepts that the barbaric imeges associated with trepanetion will continue to eclipse its most basic remedial value. Feilding is certain, however, that if Huges's theory was understood in the worldwide medical community, trepanation would be as commonly used es the "vaccine for polio."

"Well, I've heard some dumb things in my life, but I don't think I've heard anything as flaky as this," says Dr. Patrick Kelly, neurosurgeon at New York University Medical Center. "It's absolute pseudoscience."

Dear God," says Dr. Barbare Hestings, a fellow of the American Academy of Neurology, "to do something that crude to yourself is bizarrel Essentially what they're doing is altering the bony structure, and if they're good at it, they don't touch the dura [the membrene covering the brain]. They're not doing anything that would affect the brain, just the skull. They don't even enter the compartment thet has cerebral spinal fluid in it. What they're saying is happening is not anatomically possible."



The unadulterated joys of self-trepanation: before, during, and after stills from the documentery* Heartbeat in the Brain *in which Amande Feilding performs DIY heed surgery.

"Well, I've heard some dumb things in my life, but I don't think I've heard anything as flaky as this. I mean, this is really weird. It's absolute pseudoscience," agrees Dr. Patrick Kelly, chairman of the Department of Neurosurgery at New York University Medical Center. "I could look like someone from the establishment protecting my turf, but there ere major concems here. Bleeding and infections are the big ones. You could also easily puncture a hole in the brain. This is just crazy."

Despite the skepticism of neurologists, trepanation advocates point out that no medical research has yet been performed regarding the overall effects of this practice. Still, Dr. Ayub Ommaya, professor of neurosurgery at George Washington University and former chief of neurosurgery at the National Institute of Health, says, "We've done extensive research on what happens to people who get holes in the skull, usually due to skull fractures, and there is no change in the person's blood volume or blood flow."

"Listen," he says, laughing, "we simply don't need any more holes."

Peter Halvorson, a 51-year-old diamond setter from Pennsylvania, stands beneath the 30-foot ceiling of a New York City film studio, delivering en animated monologue on Huges's theory to a documentary camera crew. Halvorson

recalls that after he met Huges in Amsterdam in 1972 and decided to trepan himself, his horrified friends tried by various means to dissuede him. "They wented to take me off to the Hari Krishnas, the Scientologists, the Maharishi..." he says, "anything but trepanetion."

But today, having experienced a drematic shift in his life since the operation took place in his sterilized apartment bathroom, the perpetually optimistic Halvorson is virtually a poster boy for trepanation. A fount of boundless energy and good spirits, Halvorson suffered from early onset depression in his 20s—due, he mainteins, to the fact that his skull permanently sealed at that time. He was so constantly fatigued that it was a struggle to stand up. In the wake of his trepanation, he says, came a complete life-enhancing makeover, including unflagging enthusiasm, a heightened ability to stay focused, a significant diminishing of self-doubt, and the "permanent creative brain metabolism" of a 16-year-old.

"The person who knows the mechanism and becomes trepanned is *Homo sapiens correctus*—the person who knew and took the step to meke his condition better," he seys. "And that's the point at which we can start to unita end evolve as a society."

For Tom, who leamed of trepanetion through Helvorson, "the world would be a better place because of it. I say that because of Pete. He is one of the most positive people I've ever known, and his ability to leem is just incredible, like a child," he says. "I went it. I'd get trepanned in a minute if I could. Trepanation would be something that would make me function better in society."

"I'm e firm believer that all means of self-betterment should be looked into," says Tom. He, like Matt, would like to have the trepanation performed by a doctor, preferably a neurosurgeon, though if all else fails a dentist might do.

Those who have firsthand knowledge of trepanation have grown accustomed to being ridiculed. They've been greeted with unapologetic scorn by friends, abandoned by those who thought their eccentricity took a nasty turn. Even Feilding's sister, upon sitting down for a family reunion dinner, made glowering comments about Amanda coming to supper to spill her blood in the soup. Trepanners cleim that until money is put into extensive research on the subject, they expect to be sneered at dismissively by the medical community. They also recognize that they are potential weirdo fodder for tabloids and talk shows—the ultimate '90s self-help freaks, the zealots with brain water dripping from their gaping wounds.

Feilding shrugs it all off. If trepanation's reputation did not interfere in her children's lives, she would be actively promulgeting Huges's theory todey. "I don't went to be e lotus eeter who has this nice lollipop end sucks it privately in the comfort of my home. I see my life's artwork as how to overcome the taboo of this vital, valuable information."

But does it work? Of all the people known to have been trepanned, not one could be found who would not excitedly advocate its effects. Dr. Ommaya acknowledges this centuries-old practice may have an effect on the brain—just not the one detailed by Huges' "mechanism of brain blood volume."

"We know that at least 30 percent of the effect of any treatment is placebo," he says. "I think the reactions these people are heving ere entirely placebo. I'm open to any new kind of data, but there are great leaps in logic here. And to do thorough research on trepanation would be very difficult because it's so invasive."

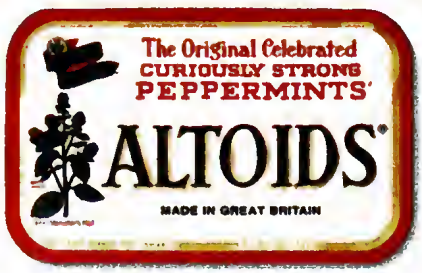
Dr. Hastings agrees. "If you took a button and sewed it to their scalp and said it had electromagnetic rays going inside the brain," she says, "that would make them happier. It would have thet effect on them."

Even Feilding concedes the possibility of trepanation as placebo effect. "You can never prove it's not all just suggestion, even to oneself. I think it's not, but it wouldn't kill me if I found out it was."

Meanwhile, the trepanners are gaining momentum in informing the masses. Feilding is sustained these days by a new artistic dreem: to produce the consummate documentary on trepanation and expanded consciousness, one that will again feature Birdie (using previously shot footage) as "a symbol of peace and wisdom." Halvorson has recently creeted a trepanation Web site (www.-trepan.com) to ettract individuals who will evail themselves of trepanation's transformative capabilities.

"If it would meke me want to write more end discipline me more, I would do it," says Matt, who is well aware that trepanation's remediel value is widely disputed. "I don't want to bore e hole in my head if I don't have to. But since I'm game for meditation and yoga, why not trepanation? I'm up for anything. So I would do it. I'm not afraid to do it. I want to do it if it's worth doing. You know what I mean?" ●

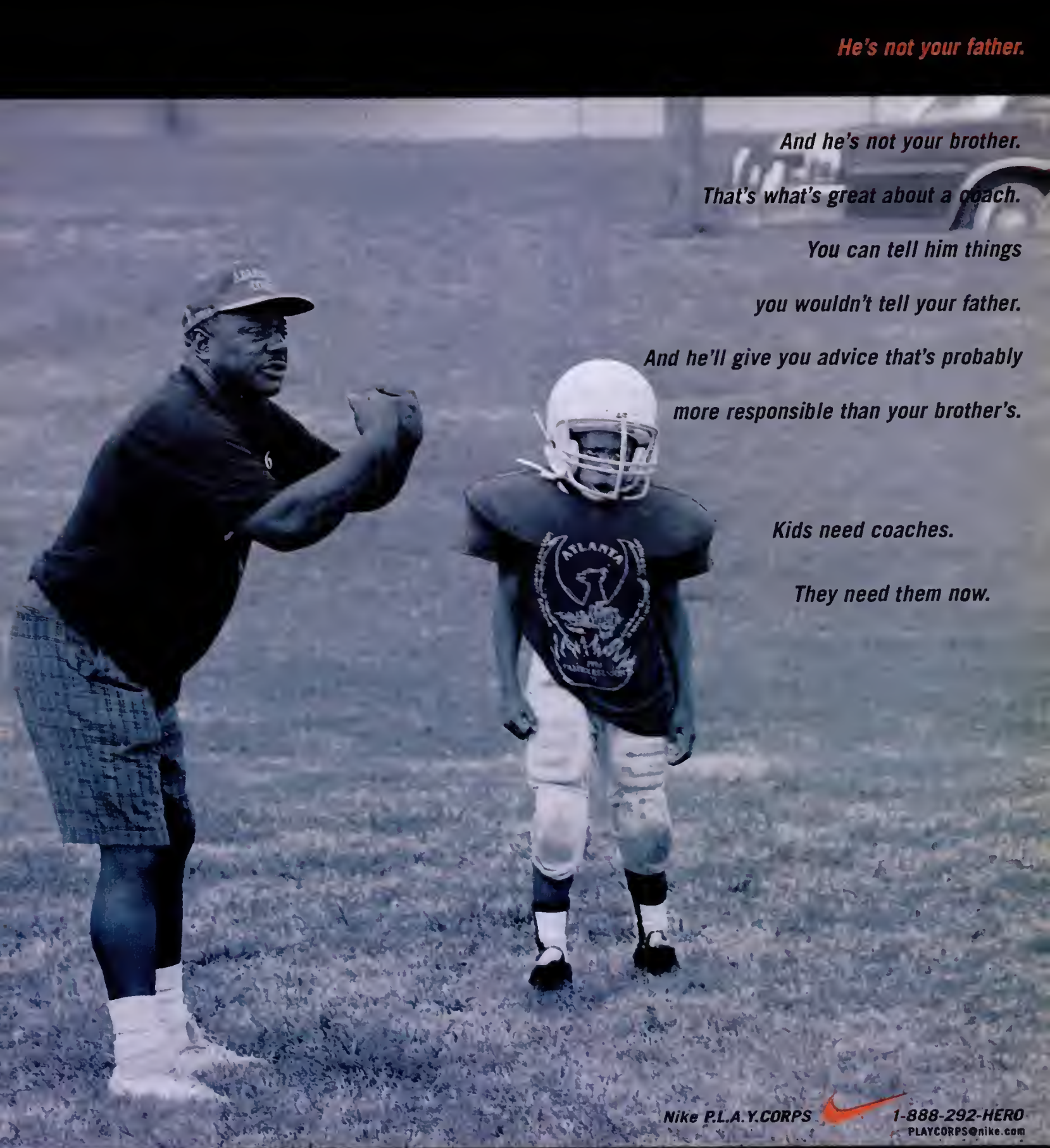
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FLY
Swarm approaching
Photographs by Donna Ingemanson


Cotton mesh T-shirt and paint-splattered jeans by Helmut Lang Jeans.
GOT-YA



Single-button jacket by Raf Simons; short-sleeve cotton shirt by Prada; flat-fronted trousers by Carol Christian Poell; Black Fly glasses by Stephen Sprouse for Bausch & Lomb.



Viscose jersey cocoon dress by Hussein Chalayan; glass "Pupa" headpiece by Emi Fujita for Hussein Chalayan.



Necklace with fly-fishing wire and lead weights by Amanda Mansell.



Metal jaw-piece by Shaun Leane for Alexander McQueen.

Where to buy, page 143. Assistant stylists: Sarah Gillfillin and Ellin Ritter; makeup: Christopher Ardoff for Public; makeup by Nars; hair: Adam Bryant for Streeters; hair products by Kiehl's.

More Peculiar Than Doris Wishman

Our greatest living proto-indie feminist auteur is also an extremely eccentric old lady who's given us, among other memorable screen figures, an action heroine who uses her huge jugs to kill. By **Joy Williams**

Whenever I call Doris Wishmen on the phone, a person sounding very much like Doris says, "Just a minute, I'll get her," and after e few moments Doris comes on, sounding remarkably similar to the person who had gone to get Doris. This seems e little peculiar but not unnaturally so because this is *Doris Wishman*, sexploitation queen of the '60s and '70s, producer and director of almost two dozen weird films stuffed with nudists, rape, lesbian slumber parties, reluctant hookers, lustful hitmen, penile implents, and considerable stabbings end slepping eround. This is *Doris Wishman*, who wrote the scripts for the bizarrely endowed (73-32-36) stripper Chesty Morgen, who in one film, *Deadly Weapons*, smothers men to death with her killer mammaries, end in another, *Double Agent 73*, takes pictures of her victims with a camera implanted in those same blimps. This is *Doris Wishman* who essembled, es it were, the unnerving 1978 classic about transsexual transformation, *Let Me Die e Woman*. She *hes* to be a little peculiar.

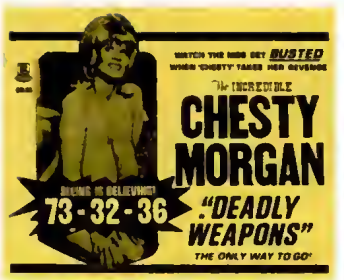
We ere to meet at a Burger King in Coconut Grove, Florida. She doesn't want me to see where she lives, I think. It's probably extremely peculiar. Doris's louche friends ere probably lounging about, speaking in odd, flat voices, their words not quite synchronized with the movements of their mouths, the women in ghastly lingerie, the men in awful ties, bad portraits of other people's dogs on the walls. I can't imagine what Doris looks like. I came late, I must confess, to an awareness of her films, having seen only the Chesty flicks (I particularly admire the sound effects accompanying Chesty's full exposure of her items prior to deployment—a sound combining the effects of a snarling German shepherd, e chain saw, and a drumroll); 1965's engagingly titled *Bad Girls Go to Hell* (I was in







Nude on the Moon
A 1963 classic from the first stage of Doris Wishman's oeuvre—the first stage being her nudist period, where a pretense was required before anybody got naked. Later, even the pretense was dropped.



Deadly Weapons
Chesty Morgan's first-ever starring role, as an advertising executive (extremely believable) who avenges her lover's murder by tracking down his killer and smothering him with the goods.



ewe of the portrayel of alcohol's effect on a susceptible individuel); end *Nude on the Moon* (1963), in which scientists arrive on the moon only to find it's been colonized by nudists—"I'll take notes," one of the scientists seys. (I recognized the moon because it wes the grounds of one of Floride's most innocent tourist ettrections, Coral Cestle, in Homestead, a 1,100-ton rock monument to unrequited love built single-handedly by a 100-pound lovesick Latvien nemed Ed Leedskalnin in the '20s.) I have not seen (but of course want to very much, now thet I am getting into this) *Another Day, Another Man* or *Too Much Too Often!* or *Love Toy* or, whet I've heerd is Wishmen's fevorite, *Indecent Desires*, in which e men menipuletes e woman's sexuality by using a voodoo doll.

The Burger King is populated with solitary young men in besebell caps paying too much for burgers end crud. I wait anxiously for Doris to appear. Will I know it is her? I hed seen a photo of someone purported to be her once in the megezine *Psychotronic*, but she was on a burro. The doors open, for about the 20th time, and a small person in black stretch pants end an aque and plum–colored sweater carrying a briefcase darts in. She is, as they say, e woman of a certain age, who hes just hed her heir cut.

She worries about her haircut, but it is nice. "I don't know how old I am," Doris says, "I've lied ebout it so meny times."

Doris has kindly brought a number of items for me in her briefcase—two unshot scripts, including the one for *Each Time I Kill*, a teen horror story in which en ugly girl methodicelly essumes the increasingly lovelier chereceteristics of freshly killed friends; e newspeper article on Doris's visit to Harvard (Doris! Hervard!); an interview that had been done by her fan/biographer, Michael Bowen; end the pièce de résistance, e video copy of her first nudie film, *Hideout in the Sun*, lost for 40 years and only recently found in a Miami storage closet. When Doris is asked the somewhat sensitive question of why there hes been renewed interest in her films, she says, "I don't know what's happening; the whole world's gone to pot."

I look at one of the Harvard articles. It mentions the incompetent acting in Doris's films, the peculiar camera techniques, end the crezy plots. "But it doesn't matter," the article says, "you're too busy scoffing, guffawing, and trying to make sure the snot doesn't fly out of your nose from laughing." I worry copy like this might hurt Doris's feelings. "Everyone's entitled to their opinion," she says magnanimously. She had a good time visiting Harvard. She was there for three days and everyone was nice to her. When Doris told them that her niece Judy had en interest in ants and roaches, someone presented her with a book about ants and roeches. A quite definitive, expensive book. (Honestly, those students at Harverd....) Judy writes some of the songs for Doris's movies end hes e terrific song that Doris sings for me, from the es-yet-unfinished *Desperate Desires*, originally titled *Dildo Heaven* end shot on video. I strongly urge Doris to restore the *Dildo Heaven* title, which wes clearly e gift from the muses. Besides, Judy's song is ebout dildos, their friendliness end reliability.

Cultists heve recently latched onto Doris Wishman. She was actually chosen as the guest of honor at this year's New York Underground Film Festival, where four of her films were scheduled to be shown. It's not just the kitsch factor. True cultists would never admit to the kitsch fector elone. Doris's films are ertless, surreel, herd-to-find, end almost unclessifieble except in terms of Doris herself. They also elude deconstruction, which makes them all the more appealing to young film students who meke the attempt—young women particularly are fascinated with Doris's independence and wild imaginings in a pre-feminist world.

Doris tells me a little about herself. She is the youngest of five children who grew up in a mansion in Westchester County, New York, but her mother died when she was two and she had e horrible stepmother. She loves her brother and sisters and they are very close to this day. Her teachers remember her es e little red-headed girl who was elweys talking. She liked weering her sister Pearl's clothes, for Pearl hed style. She was particularly fond of a yellow raincoat of Pearl's, which she would wear on the sunniest of days. Doris's first husband dropped dead in his 30s. He wanted to give her e nice big kiss when he left for the dey, but Doris rebuffed him because she wes busy with something, end then he walked out the door and she never sew him egein except es e corpse.

Pearl lent her $10,000 to make a movie after this incident, and when Doris needed more money to finish it, Pearl lent her another $10,000. She thought it was good therapy for Doris. Doris remarried but quickly divorced. She shows me a few old photographs; the husbands were always cut out with scissors. There might only be a shoe visible. "They never came first," Doris seys ebout her husbands.

Doris worked through the '60s end '70s like one possessed, making nudies and roughies but eschewing true porn. She was the most prolific femele filmmeker around and she did everything herself, except for the camerawork, at which she considered herself "too clumsy." She wrote, produced, directed, and inimitably cast ell her films, ell on a very low budget. Whatever Doris did, it was apparently exactly whet she wanted to do, and she loved it, particularly the editing. "I wesn't aware of what other people were doing," she says. "I never joined groups. If somebody wanted to talk to me, I wouldn't. I just worked."

In the '80s, Doris sold the rights to ell her films to a nice attorney from Los Angeles who wanted to give her e line of credit et his bank to meke her next movie. Then the negetive of the lest film she was working on, e slesher film called *A Night to Dismember* (Doris has the best titles!) was destroyed in the lab by a "disgruntled employee." Doris wes in despair after this latest bit of bad luck end went to work in a lingerie shop in Miemi where an occasional random soft-core porn buff would come in and scream, "You're Doris Wishmen! You're femous!" Although how they recognized her, I do not know. She claims not to know either.

We leave Burger King and go to lunch. Doris has given me everything in her briefcese except the video of *Hideout in the Sun*, which she will not part with under any circumstances. "Let's eat at the Bagel Emporium," she suggests. "I heer they have good bagels." It becomes apperent, pretty much right ewey, thet Doris hes patronized the Begel Emporium many, meny times before. A hendsome young man named Andrew Schain is working there and happily greets her. "Andy is in my movie, *Desperate Desires*," she says. "He's Billy."

"I think you should call it *Dildo Heaven*," Andrew says.

Doris's matzo ball soup is not hot enough end Andrew solicitously retires to render it hotter. She tells me the plot of *Desperate Desires*. A young man named Billy (Andrew), a bit of e shy dweeb with glasses, wants to take out a pretty girl. Actually, he is eeger to take out any pretty girl. He approaches two girls and esks them to the movies.

"You think you can take care of both of us?" they scoff. "Both of us! Both of us!"

Well, their scorn reverberetes in his dreems and he dreams (Doris loves hazy dream sequences) he has two members. Two nice big ones; I meen one isn't a stump or a nub or a wannabe or anything. Of course, then he wakes up and he's disconsolate—he only has one. Walking down the street, he picks up e scrap of paper in the gutter. It edvertises the services of e sexuel meestro who can make a man *huge*, irresistible, who can provide any man

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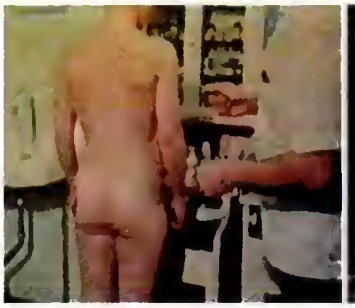
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Bad Girls Go to Hell

This 1965 work is perhaps her most popular film. "There's a revelatory refinement in Wishman's crudeness," wrote Boston Phoenix *film critic Peter Keough, "a canny sophistication in her puerile sensationalism...she's indeed a '60s filmmaker worth reclaiming."*





Let Me Die a Woman

A "documentary" in the style of Mondo Cane, *this 1978 film's grisly climax was footage of an actual male-to-female sex change operation added to the story of a man who wishes to...oh, figure it out.*

with any equipment of his choosing to satisfy his most outrageous desires. It's a cream thet costs $20 or something and Billy has to rub it on his penis for ten minutes. Billy does, he rubs and rubs, and the alarm goes off indicating it's been ten minutes and Billy fells esleep, exhausted. When he wakes up, he finds his hends are enormous.

"How do you like it?" Doris asks.

"Oh, I love it," I say. I'm a little dazed. I look at my iced tea. Iced tea?

After Doris finishes her soup and chats some more with Andrew, we leave, but not before Andrew gifts her with a bag of bagels—nine bagels and three sweet thingies with jelly centers. They are for Doris and Peerl and Judy, who live together in the mysterious apartment that's not convenient for me to see. Doris says this is because it is being "painted."

We drive to Coral Castle, where that crazy Latvian carved out ell those moons and planets and tables and fountains end thrones. There's even a heart-shaped "Feast of Love" table. We pay our $3.50 and enter. It doesn't look nearly as interesting as it did when it was Doris's moon. Plus there's a Pizza Hut across the street. We're e little disappointed. We go back through the gift shop.

"Do you know there wes a movie made here?" Doris asks the cashier.

"Yes," the cashier says, "it was called moon something, something on the moon...."

"Nude on the Moon!" we cry. And, I say, this is Doris Wishman, who produced and directed it!

"Really?" the cashier says. She seems sort of delighted, but just a little bit. "You should have told me," she says. "I would heve let you in for free."

"Story of my life," Doris says.

We now press on to find a place where we can view Doris's video. She does not have a VCR. I brought a VCR with me but we can't use it in Doris's apartment because of thet dam painting being done. We go from one video store to another. "Would it be possible," I begin, "to view a video in your store? This is Doris Wishman end this is her first film and it's been lost for 40 years."

"The first movie filmed in Miami," Doris claims.

Well, some stores are nice and others not so nice. Video Avenue...ugh! Fools! Someone suggests the librery, but it's Sunday and the librery is closed. We push on—Doris is quite spry end seemingly indefatigable—and find ourselves et an electronics store in Coral Gables called Sound Advice. This is Doris Wishmen, I begin, and we were wondering....

"Doris Wishman," the salesman says. "I am so very pleased to meet you."

We look at him. He's in his late 30s maybe; a tall, pleasant man with glesses. He's very obliging. "Now, this isn't going to be e naughty film, is it, Doris?" he says. He takes us back to e benk of TV screens and VCRs—they're all for sale, of course, end every once in a while a customer wanders back there but they don't stay for long—and Doris removes *Hideout in the Sun* from her briefcase and pops it in. It's about two brothers who rob a bank end then hide out in e nudist club while they're waiting for a boat to take them to Cuba. One brother is nesty end is killed by a cobra when he flees to the Serpentarium, which no longer exists. The nice brother finds love with a nudist. Occasionally the salesman reappears and watches for a while and says things like, "Now those breasts haven't been surgically reenhanced, have they, Doris?" or "Look et that old DeSoto," or "Tell me when you get to the Serpentarium part." But we forget to tell him.

When it's over, Doris quickly slips the tape back into her briefcase. "How did you like it?" she esks. "I like the Serpentarium part," I say. "You really didn't like it," she says. "Oh, I loved it," I say.

On the way back to the apartment, which Doris is allowing me to see from the outside, she says, "Thet selesmen was weird, wesn't he?"

"I thought he wes very nice," I say. "He was very helpful end he knew you, Doris! He knew who you are!"

"But why?" Doris says. "That's the thing. I thought he was weird." She tells me thet a young female filmmaker came down e few years ego presumably to pay homege, but she wanted Doris's "outs": all the footage she ever shot thet she didn't use. "I didn't want to give her my outs," Doris says. "I was indignent. When I told her she couldn't have my outs, she cried."

"Never give anybody your outs, Doris," I say.

I drop her off et her epricot-colored epartment. I drive out of Miami, through the Everglades slowly, slowly, so I won't hit anything at the panther "crossings." Cars roar pest me. They know there eren't any panthers end if there are, they don't care. Nothing ebout Doris hed illuminated for me to the slightest degree how she hed come to fashion her peculier end grotesque oeuvre. She's the Jean Rhys or Jane Bowles of cinema—brilliance without polish, deeply awkward and individuelistic. "I made all my films with love and care and Wishman blood and no money," is all Doris would say. "You need a gimmick and then you shoot. It was fun...."

I finally pull into a motel. I am in the middle of nowhere and elweys in the middle of nowhere there is a motel. I open the door of the Jeep and the light goes on and there, to my horror, is the bulging white bag that contains Doris's bagels. I open my mouth in a silent scream just like Meg at the end of *Bad Girls Go to Hell*. What am I to do?! She said I could call her anytime after 6 P.M. and before midnight because she is a night person, but if I turn around and drive back to Miami it will be pest midnight and besides, I can't get into her apartment because it is being painted. I have become just another misfortune in her life. I vow to do the only thing possible given the day's circumstances. I vow to defend Doris against all critics, not a difficult thing to do, actually, because she really doesn't have critics anymore. She has fens, only more and more fans. There'd have to be something wrong with you if you said you don't love e Doris Wishman film. You wouldn't be weird; there would just be something very, very wrong with you. ●

Musing on Doris

Peggy Ahwesh, film professor, Bard College: "Doris's films ere a rere combination of the prurient, the tacky, and the bizarre. When you talk to her, she'll insist that she only did it for the money and that her top priority was 'what will sell.' But the films reveal a one-of-a-kind filmmaker with the idiosyncrasies of the experimental world, the business savvy of the commercial world, and the wit and imagination of some mysterious dream world. Add to this e woman obsessed with the themes of women's social status and freedom, the contemporary drama of fear, mistrust, and challenge between the sexes—someone with a genuine feel for the newly exposed, tawdry human body of the early '60s—and you can feel the first chill of the Wishman effect.... The films offer the prerequisite weirdness of the genre, but they have a seedy underlying resonance of the fear and hostility toward women in our world, which Doris describes in her own profound and tawdry way."

Blossom Lefcourt, film student: "Why doesn't her work offend me? I think the answer to this lies pertially in the idea thet the themes in Wishman's work are so embedded in our cultural framework, so much a part of the mainstream, that one becomes immune to these images; they don't fully register after time. This aside, I believe the true reason I watch and enjoy Wishman is for the simple fact that I'm not supposed to. She is a private rebellion, ironically found within the realm of filmmaking thet I am supposed to be rebelling against."

Taken from the best Doris Wishman–related Web site: http://www.echonyc.com/~peggy/doris/index.html.

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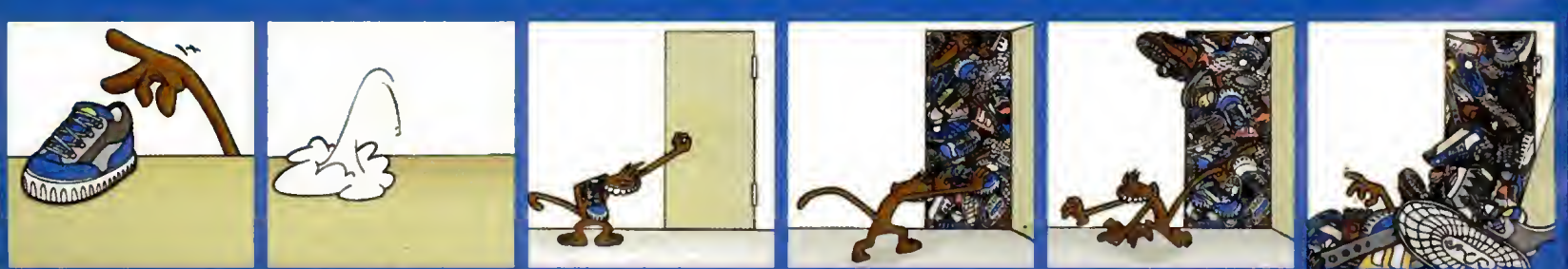
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People's Poet

On the long-awaited sequel to Pulp's breakthrough album, *Different Class*, England's unofficial laureate Jarvis Cocker perfects his poetry of the prosaic. By **Nick Hornby**

8 Pulp
This Is Hardcore (Island)

Just before the lights went down at the Radiohead show in London last November, a tall, thin, bespectacled man walked into the arena to take his seat. And a roar went up—or, at least, a delighted and genuinely affectionate squeal of excitement: "Jarvis! Jarvis is here!" In England right now, the declension goes like this: I love Jarvis, you love Jarvis, he/she/it loves Jarvis, we love Jarvis, they love Jarvis. It is difficult to imagine any other member of Britpop's aristocracy provoking the same reaction—I'm not sure the Gallaghers attract such warmth, and an audience that knows every word of "Creep" probably wouldn't muster much of a greeting for Baby Spice. But then, Jarvis Cocker isn't aristocracy. He's our pal, in much the same way Boy George was our pal: He's pop-star exotic, sure, and he's clearly very smart, but there's something leveling in there too, something *representative*.

At the beginning of "The Fear," the first song on Pulp's very wonderful new album *This Is Hardcore*, Cocker sings, "This is the sound of someone losing the plot / Making out that they're okay when they're not / You're gonna like it—but not a lot." It's a lyric that goes some way toward explaining Pulp's appeal in the U.K. For a start, it's resolutely English: The last line is a play on the catchphrase of an irredeemably uncool game-show host/magician named Paul Daniels, and you wouldn't catch any other pop musician in the entire history of the world conceding, even privately, that Paul Daniels exists. Cocker, however, lives in the same world as the rest of us, and admits as much without sounding too mundane or blowing his chic. That's no mean feat.

The other Jarvis charecteristic that explains why people *like* rather than worship him, is that he is funny—a quality most musicians possess only unwittingly. Now, I've always had a problem with humor in music, mainly because it's invariably hopelessly disposable—how many times do you want to listen to a joke?—but Cocker's wit is capable of gear-changes beyond the reach of most social observers whose currency is the pop song. For a start, Pulp songs almost always contain, somewhere within them, at least a snatch of melody that makes you melt. And, more crucially, Cocker's jokes are always undershot with a kind of benign despair: "Help the Aged" begins with a wry twist ("One time they were just like you / Drinking, smoking, sex, and sniffing glue"), but by the climax—"You can dye your hair, but there's one thing you can't change"—the song is breaking your heart in ways you couldn't possibly have anticipated. On *This Is Herdcore*, Pulp make it clear they have outgrown Britpop and belong right up there with Ray Davies and Costello and Morrissey, those who look at England with a satirist's eye and a balladeer's heart.

If Cocker does have an eye on rock'n'roll posterity (and if he doesn't, why does the intro to "A Little Soul" pay homage to/rip off Smokey Robinson's "Tracks of My Tears"?), it might explain why the new album sounds slightly clunky in places. The band seems to be aiming for timelessness, both lyrically (there's nothing on this album as au courant as *Different Class*'s rave-inspired "Sorted for E's and Wizz") and sonically, only to wind up sounding a bit dated. Where *Different Class* paid lip service to modern dance culture, *This Is Herdcore* occasionally reminds one why nobody listens to new wave albums anymore. In the U.K., new wave was the Boomtown Rats, Joe Jackson, Tom Robinson—mild punk rock with intelligence, sincerity, an organ, and a wearying tendency to write lame songs satirizing the power of the popular press. So it doesn't help that Cocker sounds most like Bob Geldof when he is trying to sound like David Bowie. New wave is a period of British pop that hasn't aged well, perhaps because it aimed for musical neutrality and ended up sounding merely anonymous. After all, what are you supposed to do with music you can't dance or drink to, cry or think about?

Jarvis Cocker is an acute and amusing chronicler of our life and times, and at the moment it is impossible to imagine a day when we will not be interested in his views on more or less anything. But sometimes—on this album's "Seductive Barry" and "Party Hard," for instance—you wish he'd communicate via chat show or letter rather than song. The worst thing music can do—music that has no post-modern intentions, at any rate—is draw attention to its own artifice, and that happens more than once here. It doesn't happen often enough to put anyone off, though, because a good eight of the 12 songs here are as addictive and as cute as pop music can be nowadays. If people love Jarvis, maybe it's because they feel the need for someone like him in their life: Who else is there who smiles back at you in quite the same way? "I'll read a story if it helps you sleep at night / I've got some matches if you ever need a light," he sings on "Dishes," a reluctant redeemer's plea for recognition of his limitations. The irony is, of course, that any performer capable of providing such basic human services is always going to inspire more affection than anybody has a right to expect. ●



Jarv Cocker gets by with a little help from his friends: from left, Mark Webber, Steve Mackey, Jarvis Cocker, Candida Doyle, and Nick Banks.



4 All Saints
All Saints (London)

The first Brit babe band to blow up in the wake of the Spice Girls, All Saints begen es e feiled duo end then became a successful quartet in the Spice mold—i.e., reasonably attractive women with not perticularly phenomenal voices striking fairly ridiculous "street" poses in various states of undress. They've topped the U.K. charts while hyping themselves as an authentic R&B alternative to the Spicesters' shameless product-pop. Not only is the sales pitch disingenuous (England already has Eternal, its own En Vogue), but it also misses the point: The Spice Girls ere shamelessly prefeb, personality-rich bubblegum, and therefore huge fun, while All Saints, with their borderline soul jams and insincere leck of contrivance, are pseudo-real, and therefore a drag.

Whereas Spice tunes are the stuff of classic fluff, a typical no-nonsense Sainty non-song—like the Brit-hits "I Know Where It's At" and "Never Ever"—boasts e tossed-off chorus nearly identical to the nondescript verses. If the songs stick in the memory, it's not because they've got that spark but because they're so bleedin' repetitive. One rappin' Saint sounds like TLC's Left Eye doing e Bart Simpson impersonation, and you don't wanna know what these wispy-voicad waifs do to Labelle's mighty "Lady Marmalade." Factor in producer/players (including Neneh Cherry/Massive Attack collaboretor Cameron McVey) endeavoring to reproduce American R&B radio recipes and you've got a seriously wetered-down funk-fakin' formule. The sole track thet rocks is the one with e gimmick—a hip-hop version of "Under the Bridge" that, in a flesh of keraoke-style literalness, samples the Chili Peppers' original.

Although they may ride the Spicies' bra straps up the charts whila steadfastly denying a cash-in, these Saints eren't above exploiting some lesbienlite chic on their album cover, which sports the three white Saints practically suckling at the dark-skinned sister's absurdly prominent breasts. The symbolism is inadvertently clear: Here's enother pack of mostly pale wennabes milking black culture dry.

Barry Walters

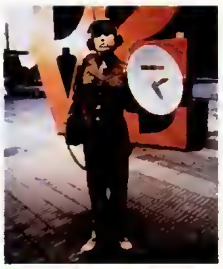
3 Page & Plant
Walking Into Clarksdale (Atlantic)

The question we would like to ask of aging rock stars who thrust new material into the marketplace 20, 30 years after their glory days is this: What have they learned? Finding a pop star who can answer this is as rare as wisdom (e good Bob Dylan is hard to find). But the question we are going to esk of Jimmy Pege end Robert Plant regarding *Walking Into Clarksdale*—their first all-new work together since Led Zeppelin broke up—is not what they have leerned, but the more common end less compelling rock query: What have they lost?

Well, they certainly heven't lost their insight into women because they never had any to begin with. Led Zep were always baffled by the opposite sex—remember "Dazed and Confused"'s biblical bullshit about how tha "soul of a woman was created below"? If that's misogyny, at least it reflected fascination with the female quagmire. For an album so crammed with supposed love songs, *Walking Into Clarksdale* is just an essay in autoeroticism. In "Heart in Your Hand" Plant wonders, "Do your lips still call my name?" (Only when I stub my toe.) In "When the World Wes Young" he commands, "Coma look and see my footsteps through etamity." (Gee, I think I'm washing my heir thet night.) And "Sons of Freedom" wins hands down: "I am united in disarray." (*I* am united? With this ring, I me wed.)

What the duo has really lost is grandeur of sound. Even though the Paga and Plant–produced album is "recorded and engineered by Steve Albini," you get the feeling the über–alt-rock producer only took the job because it sounded funny. Except for an awkward grunge surge in the middle of "When the World Was Young," you can't really hear any Albini influence. What mada all those Led Zep classics the perfect car/sex/party soundtrack was noise value—Page's groin-groan guitar, the perpetual motion of Plant's screech. *Clarksdale*'s "new" songs bear a faint family resemblance to all those five-minute power ballads of yore. And "Sons of Freedom" proves Page still has a few lickety-licks up his sleeve. But time has not been kind to Plant's throat and he can't muster a frection of his former intensity. That wouldn't matter if he'd try some new kind of song that could play up the tired-old-guy angle with the proper wisdom and dread. Some people never learn.

Sarah Vowell





6 Cornelius
Fantasma (Matador)

8 Dimitri From Paris
Sacrebleu (Atlantic)

Once, everyone wented to be a Rock Star; now, as sound-boy obscurantism and the DJ-as-producer tradition infect rock, it seems everybody wants to be a Lone Bedroom Eccentric. Rock Stars are gaudy, hounded, sheckled to jealous back-up bands and tha bottom line, and constantly confronted by the sweaty, lighter-waving masses. LBEs are cult heroes to their chosen people, one-man brands free to sit home alone composing cryptic collages on their samplers, and beholden only to the occasional in-store appearance and fanzine interview. Some, like Beck, even get to be genteely femous, meke that boy-genius shit *pay*. One day soon the LBE will bury the Rock Star altogether, and moonwalk across the grave.

Cornelius, a.k.a. 27-year-old Keigo Oyamada, is an LBE from his mop top to his shell-toe Adidas: cutesy stage name (from *Planet of the Apes*), benignly freaky disposition (he's a teenybopper icon in Japan), and an overwhelming compulsion to name-check the last 30 years of music history in a single song. *Fantasma*, his third full-length and debut U.S. album, is en exuberant keleidoscope of hip-hop, noisecore, film soundtracks, cheesy listening, indie rock, even *Sesame Street*. "Mic Check" opens with a whistled Beethoven's Fifth intro, then morphs into breekbeat; "2010" salutes videogame themes; the Beck-like "Thenk You for the Music" marries a down-home hermonica jam with hip-hop shuffle; "Monkey," e wacky Carl Stalling–esque cartoon score, sounds like a kid high on Sugar Smacks pogoing eround the room.

Fantasma is an endearing music-obsessive-comes-of-age tale—from Saturday morning TV to arena rock to bootleg Jean-Jecques Perrey reissues—but once the initial weirdness-buzz wears off, there's not a whole lot to letch onto. Such is the disposability of much LBE music: no grand statements, few memorable songs. So it's off to the next smooth talker with a Moog fetish and a ton of incredibly strange vinyl. I'm sure Cornelius thinks he's "deconstructing" pop or something, but A) he's really just cobbling cool sounds together end B) the post-everything genre-obliteration thing has been done better by everyone from the Boredoms to Björk.

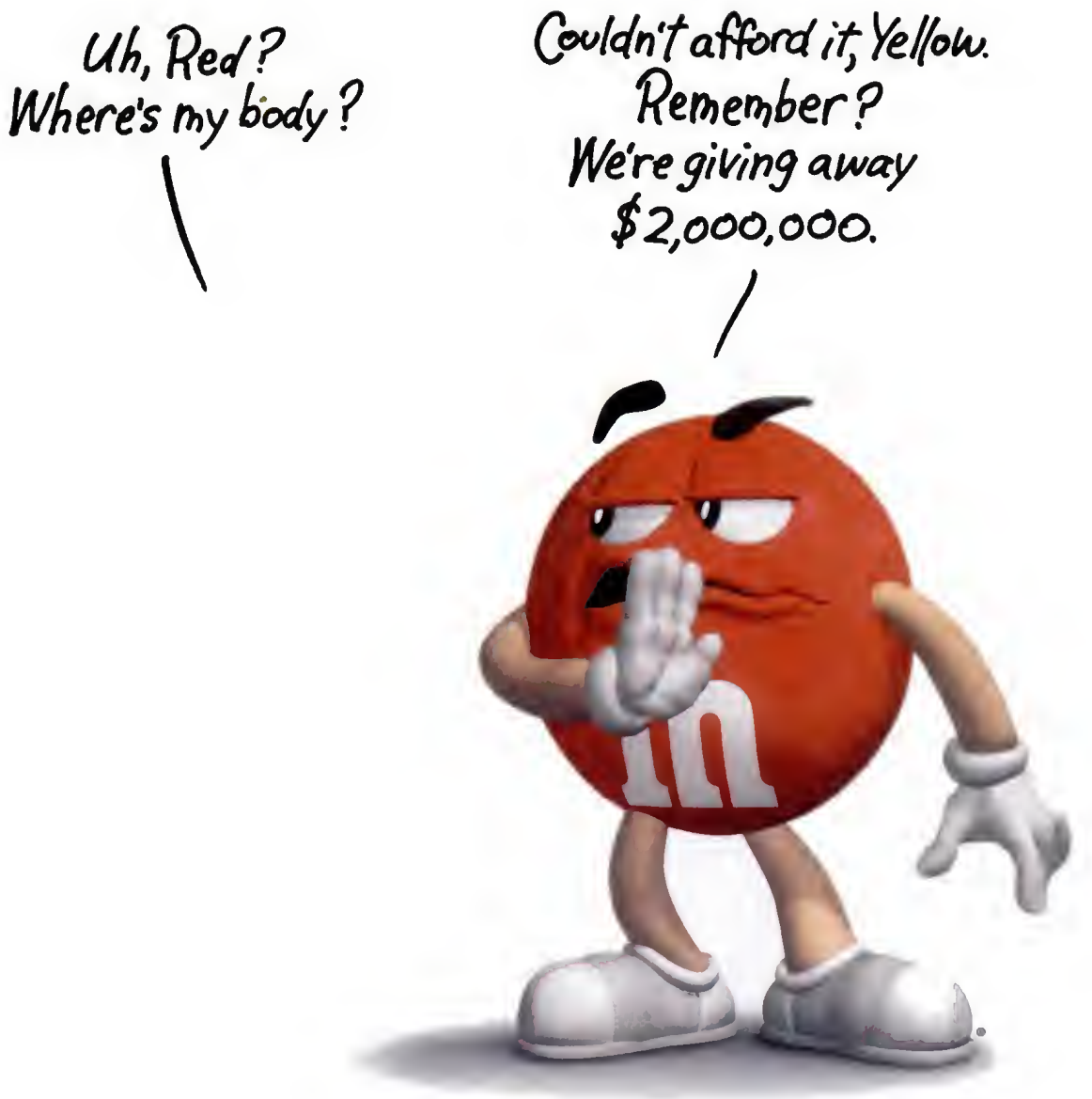
Including Dimitri From Peris, who arrogantly (and erroneously) proclaims himself the inventor of "bedroom culture"—DJing for "intimate moments" and the simple love of sound. But *Sacrableu*, the debut full-length by the French DJ, soundtrack composer, and remixer (Björk, Brand New Heavias), is both a smoothly coherent lesson in A.M.D. (after Martin Denny) pop history, and a semi-ironic, *vive-la-France* rejoicing in Gallic clichés. For instance, the cartoon video for the first single "Secre Français" portrays a little man in e skinny mustache end e black berat stalking pouty go-go girls.

A tightly composed soundtrack to some imaginary French New Wave film ebout a club-hopping ne'er-do-well, *Sacrebleu* imaginetively updates '60s spy jazz ("Dirty Larry," a theme to a fake TV detective show), deee-litaful disco ("Back in the Daze"), exotica ("Le Moogy Reggae"), Burt Bacharach (twice!), not to mention tha modern sounds of trip-hop, et al. (the sinuous "Une World Mysteriouse"). "There are many things I like a lot, but there are three things I like best: Love! Love! Love!" proclaims a giggling Lolita on the cheeky "Epilogue." A few references to coed "pj parties" leter, and it's apparent that Dimitri From Paris is a "Bedroom Eccentric" of enother kind—the type that never sleeps alone.

Sia Michel

***Spin* rating system**

10	A Classic	5	Marginal
9	Near perfect	4	Poor
8	Very good	3	Dud
7	Worthy	2	Worthless
6	Reasonably good	1	Vile



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8 Buckfunk 3000
First Class Ticket to Telos
(Language/Crammed Discs)

Electro is the Ur-text of electronica, the origin story its children—jungle, techno, hip-hop—revisit again and again, brushing up on the standard account of where they came from, noticing for the first time those lines scrawled in between the wild-style calligraphy and penciling in their own comments. But where the hip-hop nation heard a valorization of black street culture in Afrika Bambaataa's "Planet Rock," the group of contemporary musicians who've been dubbed "eclectro" spotted the sci-fi trappings and heard at least as much Dr. Who as Dr. Octagon.

Pale, skinny, lank-haired—like a



Geek beats: Buckfunk 3000's Si Begg.

set of triplets separated at birth but who all grew up to marry women named Gladys—Richard D. James, Tom Jenkinson, and Mike Paradinas (a.k.a. Aphex Twin, Squarepusher, µ-ziq) recast electronic dance music as a food fight in which

Gangsta House

Speed garage, a hybrid of house and jungle, has conquered British clubland. By **Simon Reynolds**

Sometime in early '97, e segment of London's jungle audience began to wonder exactly why they were listening to such dark, depressing music. Jungle had been shaped by the desperetion of the recession-wracked mid-'90s; now, with "loedsamoney" in their pockets, the junglists didn't feel desperate anymore. Searching for e sound that reflected their affluence and nonchalance, these mostly black Londoners built a brand new scene based around the "finer things in life"—designer-label clothes, champegne, cocaine, and garage music.

Garage has been a popular sound at the upscale end of British clubland since 1991. Originally a songful and soulful New York variant of Chicago house, garage's mellow opulence appealed as a "classy" alternative for older clubbers who reviled rave culture as juvenile and lumpen. Most home-grown U.K. garege slavishly imitated American producers like Masters at Work and Deep Dish. But when the ex-junglists entered the fray, they creeted e mutant strain—"speed garage," e hybrid of house's slinky paneche and jungle's rude-boy exuberance.

Tougher and faster than its U.S. prototype, speed garage is a winning combination of the most crowd-pleasing elements from house, jungle, and hardcore rave: sultry divas, dancehall reggae chatter, helium-shrill vocal samples, "dread" bass, and the filtering effects used by outfits like Daft Punk to make sounds shiver up your spine. But what really defines the genre is the beat: syncopated, highly textured snares with a curiously organic, wood-block timbre. Unlike house's metronomic four-to-the-floor kick-drum, speed garage is polyrhythmically perverse, riddled with itchy percussive tics and micro-breakbeats. And where most rave music is asexual, speed garege is lascivious—the skipping snares tug at your hips, the rump-shaker b-lines wiggle your ass.

Speed garege's sexiness is probably a side effect of British clubbers' shift of allegiance from anti-aphrodisiac Ecstasy to horny-making cocaine. The craze for coke ties in with the way the scene resurrects the snobby exclusivity of the pre-rave club culture of the mid-'80s (the last time the economy was booming). Most speed garege clubs ban jeans and sneakers. Speed garage's ethos of "living large" also parallels playa rap's "we-are-the-beeutiful-people/we-be-the-baddest-clique" hedonism. Hence the garege bootleg version of Lil' Kim/the Notorious B.I.G.'s "Crush on You" doing the rounds.

Speed garage converts hail the music as a revolution in British dance culture. Certainly, its victory has been swift and total. Almost overnight, London's pirate radio stations switched from jungle to

stakes is low and novelty high. Though their music is an unprecedented meeting of geek culture and beat culture, there's no getting around the fact that they rock those funky beats in the clipped cadences of John Cleese performing the Parrot Sketch.

As leader of the Cabbage Head collective and the Noodles label (the title of whose recent compilation, *The Death of Cool*, displays no irony whatsoever), Si Begg has cornered an oddly culinary-minded segment of this geek market. But as Buckfunk 3000, he stops teasing your taste buds and aims a zap gun at Uranus. *First Class Ticket to Telos* revisits the classic electro sound—its slap drums so thin to modern ears, its "futuristic" timbres rendered old-hat the moment Hank Shocklee dropped his first bomb—and frantically tricks it up in all the gear the dance world has amassed since "Scorpio" first crawled onto the airwaves. A cut like "Planet Shock Future Rock" takes the tinny, bell-like percussive sound from "Planet Rock," integrates it into drum'n'bass's stop-and-start breakbeats, and subjects it to techstep jungle's dive-bomb bass, making eclectro's mix'n'match aesthetic seem, for once, less like a head game than a gadget boy's version of a drum circle.

Until now, Begg had always struck me as a rather minor, if amusing, talent. But if he's been looking for the perfect beat, he's found it. (Crammed Discs, 750 La Playa, Ste. 739, San Francisco, CA 94121) **Jeff Salamon**



U.K. playas: speed garage DJ-duo Tuff Jam, Karl "Tuff Enuff" Brown, left, and Matt "Jam" Lamont.

speed garage, while genre-defining singles like Double 99's "Ripgroove" and 187 Lockdown's "Gunman" penetrated the U.K. pop charts. But critics have accused speed garage of being merely a crafty composite of the most cheesily effective clichés from the last seven years of U.K. dance. Guilty as charged; then again, cheese adds flava, and only the sternest purist could resist the sound's alluring obviousness. And more innovative strains of speed garage *are* emerging, like the dub-spacious, percussadelic productions of artists such as Ramsey & Fen, which recall the '80s avant-disco of Arthur Russell. There's also the fierce, jungle-dominated style some call "dangerous garage": baleful sub-bass pressure, uproarious ragga chants "time-stretched" so that the sample seems to crack apart, dub-reggae FX (sonar bleeps, sirens, gunshots, explosions of reverb). Generally, the best version of any given speed garage track is the stripped-down and weirder "dub."

Most speed garage compilations—including the first domestically released collection, Ultra's *Tuff Jams Vol. 1*—have so far ignored these two extremes of the scene's sound spectrum in favor of song-oriented, diva-tastic anthems. *Tuff Jams Vol. 1* and similar compilations like *EZ of Freek FM Presents: Underground Garage Flavas* (Breakdown) and *UK Garage Fever* (Subversive) offer a good entry point for the intrigued. But if you want to go straight to the genre's cutting edge(s), you're better off scouring the import bins of your local independent record store. Look out for:

Gant—"Sound Bwoy Burial" (Positiva)

Fabulous Baker Boys—"Oh Boy" (Multiply)

Ramsey & Fen—*The Off-Key Experience* EP (Very Important Plastic) and "Love Bug" (Bug Records)

Underground Distortion—"Everything Is Large" (Satellite)

A Baffled Republic—"Bad Boys (Move in Silence)" (One Step/Catch)

Soundscape—"Dubplate Culture" (Satellite)

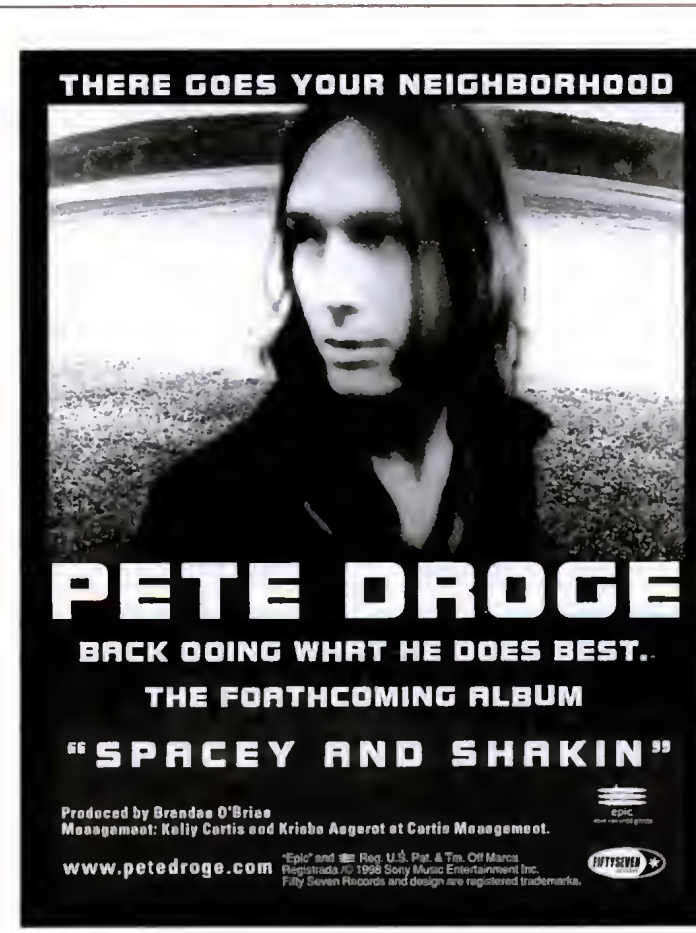
Strictly Dubz IV—"Small Step" (Nice N'Ripe)

Da Stylus—"Crazy" (Mecca)

Scott Garcia—"It's a London Thing" (Connected)

KMA—"Kaotic Madness" and *Recon Mission* EP (both KMA) ●







4 Hayden
The Closer I Get (Outpost)

What if Eddie Vedder found an out-of-tune guitar at a yard sale, retreated to a basement apartment in, say, Toronto, adopted an innocuous one-word pseudonym, and committed his innermost broken dreams to a four-track cassette recorder? Never happen? Neh, probably not. In the meantime, say hello to Hayden. But keep your voice down, he's a little fragile.

Hayden Desser is a twentysomething Toronto boy-next-door with a raspy bellow that could move mountains, if he wasn't preoccupied with watching a tape of Elvis's road manager on TV, talking about how you can't protect a 42-year-old man from himself. This is the gist of "Memphis," in which Hayden relates to Elvis's tragic helplessness in much the same way he related to the children of Susan Smith, the infanticidal South Carolina mom who dominated tabloid TV a few years back (see "When This Is Over" on Hayden's promising debut *Everything I Long For*). For Hayden, life is a televised nightmare in which every quote bagins with the words, "Sadly, no."

Problem is, on *The Closer I Get*, Hayden doesn't have much to say about all this helplessness (except that it's sad), and as a result, we only relate to him as a type—the post-grunge loner who'll never take advantage of his songwriting gifts bacause he's too scared to leave the house and experience anything (he admits as much on "Better Off Inside"). In real life, Hayden leaves the house to perform at clubs, musing between songs with deadpan comic timing, even edging toward a metaphorical point now and again. You'd never guess eny of that from *The Closer I Get*. Here, Hayden's songs are like little lost dogs—soggy and pathetically endearing, but not really worth the grief. **Charles Aaron**



7 Various Artists
Fat Beats & Brastraps
(Rhino)

"We have been here forever. And we will be forever and ever." The women who collaborated with Rhino to compile this ambitious triple-CD history of female hip-hop could have appropriated KRS's proclamation for their title. Those who were there will tell you that girls were present in those fabled Bronx parks after dark, back-spinning on the ones-and-twos, breakin' and lockin', and wielding a Krylon aerosol can as good as any ol' boy. *Fat Beats & Brastraps* proves this by unearthing the 1979 gem, "Rhymin' and Rappin' " by Paulette & Tanya Winley, a 12-inch released on their dad's lebel, Paul Winley Records.

Although most black girls tend to eschew feminism es e self-identifying tag (something about racism and classism all up in the movement), Dimples D. was glad to put it down for the ladies in her 1983 jem "Sucker D.J.'s (I Will Survive)"—"Men are known as multipliers / They're also known as the biggest liars...They hit and run and after they're done / Your best friend will be their No. 1." But it was the original Big Mama—14-year-old Lolita Gooden, a.k.a. Roxanne Shanté—who answered U.T.F.O.'s mildly misogynistic "Roxanne, Roxanne" with her own "Roxanne's Revenge." U.T.F.O. actually managed to produce their own riposte—Roxanne's "The Real Roxanne"—a few weeks before Shanté's version actually hit the record stores, perhaps hoping to shield themselves with a girl and turn it into a catfight. The result was the first war-on-wax in hip-hop history. (Wax being the distinguishing factor, battle rhymes having persisted throughout rap's early mix-tape days.) After Roxanne versus Roxanne, answer records became their own subgenre: Examples on *Fat Beats* include the Doug E. Fresh–dissing "The Show Stoppa (Is Stupid Fresh)" by Super Nature (Salt-N-Pepa's earliest incarnetion), and Pebblee-Poo's unwarranted and sensational "A Fly Guy" (a response to Boogie Boys' "A Fly Girl"). Girls set it off when it came to battle rap, a full decade before the media christened Lil' Kim the queen of nesty.

After rap's early-to-mid-'80s glory period, though, *Brastraps* just plain loses steam. And it's not fair, because the ladies never did. While



The Techno Rebels

The future is 13 years old: Detroit techno pioneers Derrick May and Kevin Saunderson get anthologized. By **Rob Michaels**

The notion thet you need "real" instruments to make "real" music is so discredited that, like phrenology, the *Hitler Diaries*, and Alternative Nation's manifest destiny, it needs no further refutetion. Anyone who's still not convinced need only hear these career retrospectives of two of the giants of Detroit Techno, the music that wired the world's dance floors and wrote the code for the "electronica revolution."

In the 1980s, the city that was once built on deeth-tripping rock-'n'roll, Motown, and P-Funk was a bleak picture of disinvestment, e blank slate to be reimegined by anyone with the vision and will to do so. Steeped in funk but piqued by Kraftwerk, Visage, and Italian disco, a crew of young bleck upstarts set to reconstructing the Motor City on the drums and wires of electronic dance music. Militantly futuristic techno auteurs Derrick May, Kevin "Reese" Saunderson, Juan Atkins, and Eddie "Flashin' " Fowlkes began with the premise that a computerized age demands computerized music, and that its "soul" would only be enhanced by the choice of machinery. And since their synthetic creations had to serve audiences engeged in the most organic and pbysical of pursuits (namely, rump-shaking), economics ensured that they remained more JBs than ELP.

Operating as Mayday and as Rhythim is Rhythim, Derrick Mey emerged as the movement's philosopher king, a meticulous creetor of complex, body-friendly art music. After creating genre-defining late '80s singles such as "Nude Pboto" and "Strings of Life," the unprolific May has spent the '90s on the global DJ circuit, reveling in his own mythology and endlessly deferring his next release.

Innovator—a double-CD on Mey's own Transmat label—gethers all of his classics in one plece, and despite subsequent years filled with acid, hardcore, trance, and jungle, they still sound fresh. Tracks like "Strings of Life" don't just leyer rich, drametic keyboards atop ferocious sambe beats. They're also shot througb with a deep melancboly that reflects the decayed grace and vacant landscapes of a once-vibrant city languishing on death row. This instrumental music's leck of reedy lyrical handles is the sole excuse the rock-crit establishment has for spending 1989 in therapy with Bob Mould while ignoring Detroit's bold experiments. *Innovator* would be an even stronger indictment of this failure if it weren't so cluttered with pointless fragments and interludes, and insteed focused on the singles.

Best known for the commercial triumphs of Inner City, whose "Big Fun" and "Good Life" singles tore up the charts in 1989, Kevin Saunderson has also built up a massive catalog of daring and undeniable techno, most of which is collected on *Faces & Phases* (Planet E). While Saunderson's pieces as Tronik House, E-Dancer, and Reese and Santonio may lack May's majesty, they're filled with sharp edges and fearsome grooves. "Bounce Your Body to the Box" pulses with furious funk, "Ahnongay" floats in an eerie bitcbes brew, and "The Savage and Beyond" fuses the polyrhythmic punch of a West African drum troupe with the alien soundtracks of early Chrome. Too bad the CD contains such brutally short edits of some of Saunderson's finest tracks.

Simultaneously classic and avant-garde, these two anthologies contain some of the most futuristic roots music around. Remember the art-nerd rallying cry "Fuck Art, Let's Dance"? For more than a decade, the Motor City man-machines have proven that it's not an either/or proposition. ●



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Fatal
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fine selections ere mede from Queen Latifah's formidable body of work, it becomes increasingly eesy to complein about whet's missing. Abandon your project if you can't get clearances for tracks by MC Lyte—the one MC who broke down "she sounds good for a girl" B-boy cheuvinism (in no smell part due to her gruff voice, which made most partygoers take her for e boy on her first singles). The presence of lost gems like "Wild Thang" by 2 Much featuring LeSheun doesn't go unnoticed. But neither does the absence of Nikki D., who got her deel because Russell Simmons wes in the audience when she ripped e freestyle at the Apollo, eight months pregnant. And forget about it if you're going to leave out Monie Love, Hurricane Gloria, and today's reigning divas Lil' Kim and Foxy Brown. Substanderd fast-forward filler by Behamedie, J.J. Fed, end the Conscious Daughters doesn't meke up for these glaring geps. But while *Fat Beats* is herdly definitive, the compilers' sheer devotion and reverence for the sista MCs who pioneered the art of crowd-moving shines through. **dream hampton**

7 Shellac
Terraform (Touch and Go)

Depending on your perspective, Steve Albini is either e welcome fly in the ointment or a pain in the ess. His stellar production work with everyone from Nirvene to Palace has resulted in some ertfully unglossy recordings, while as a writer and quote machine, he's doggedly cempaigned for the old modernist separetion of ert from the merket (justifying his work with Bush required some logic contortions). Unfortunately, his rhetoric often drowns out the impassioned noise he mekes with Shellac.

Grounded in the same mid-'80s Midwest merger of American hardcore and U.K. postpunk (Geng of Four, Wire) that informed Big Black, Shellec's music revels in the sonorous qualities of rock's besic elements. Albini's guitar distills rock's tired roar down to a uniquely brittle bite, end drummer Todd Treiner grecefully resurrects the lost ert of the Bonham stomp. On the eerly singles "Wingwalker" end "Billierd Player Song," there was a thrilling sense of e drama unfolding while the tape ren—a feeling that proved difficult to sustain at album length on the 1994 debut *Shellac at Action Park*.

Terraform, the sequel, opens with "Didn't We Deserve a Look at You the Wey You Reelly Are"—12 minutes of tension and little release—with Trainer subtly shifting the song from Slint-y groove to boogie blues with e DJ's sensitivity. "House Full of Garbege" gets bogged down in fecal sludge (sonic and lyricel), but Albini finds angels between the frets on "This Is a Picture," and the buoyant "Disgrace" recasts Yes's "Roundabout" es proto–math rock. Shellac take their name from one of the eerliest meterials used to make records, and a similar sentiment underlies "Copper," the implausibly catchy blest that closes *Terraform*. A craftsman's tribute to the workaday metal that'll "never be gold" but has its own unique luster, it's the raw materialist anthem that Albini's spent his whole career honing. **Greg Milner**

7 Spectre
The Second Coming
(WordSound)

Ensconced in the New York City borough they call "Crooklyn," the WordSound collective is on the cutting edge of '90s neo-dub. Inspired equally by mid-70s Jamaica's roots reggae heyday and Adrien Sherwood's ongoing On-U Sound output, WordSound are true believers who edd industrial rhythms, scratchy samples, helf-coherent raps, and broken beets to dub's architecture of echoey spaces and profound silences. Spectre, the dark magus of this shadowy posse, looms large in the WordSound world thenks to his 1995 debut *The Illness*, the two bone-dry *Subterranean Hitz* compilations he produced, and numerous remixes. Sparer than most of his labelmates' material, Spectre's music is as elegantly creepy as producer Roger Cormen's Edger Allan Poe adaptations.

A vempire-movie soundtrack taking off from a bigger-than-Jesus concept that never quite delivers, *The Second Coming* fits neetly into the Gothic vibe pervading everything from *The X-Files* to the *Scream* series to the Insane Clown Posse. Spectre's world is a lonely place to live. "The Spy Who Came In From the Cold" has the atmospheric werehouse chill of the label's Brooklyn 'hood. Even when guests

like singer Caz and rappers Mr. Dead and Sensational bring the kitsch, they only temporarily transform Spectre's condemned funhouse into somewhere the Gravediggaz might feel at home.

On "Return of the Ill Saint," Spectre creates an epic soundtrack out of a grim three-note melody, an Egyptian string sample, and his own decelerated voice droning about "the Mighty Unseen Force that makes all things possible." Which implies that He is ultimately to blame for Spectre's back-from-the-dead shtick running out of steam about halfway through. Still, at its best *The Second Coming* sounds almost as potent as dub messiah Lee Perry's nearly forgotten *Cloak and Dagger*, whose creaky doors, rattling chains, and overall dub noir seem to haunt Spectre's more grandiose Aleister Crowley–in-Egypt visions. He may come off as a corny Antichrist at times, but Spectre should do you fine until the real Jesus Age comes along. (WordSound, 129 N. 11th St., Brooklyn, NY 11211)

Richard Gehr

8 Morcheeba
Big Calm
(China/Sire)

6 Sneaker Pimps
Becoming Remixed
(Virgin)

Once an edgy and exotic soundtrack for club-weaned cannabis connoisseurs, trip-hop is now about as common as dirt weed and as safe as milk of magnesia, what with adult-oriented album-artists like Sheryl Crow and Abra Moore filching its low-fi loopery. Always a hippie groove band at heart, Morcheeba have responded impressively to trip-hop's AOR-ization with *Big Calm*—possibly the most seamless mix of VH1 pop and DJ culture so far, and a joint that recalls the Mamas & the Papas as much as Portishead.

The seeds were all there in Morcheeba's '96 debut *Who Can You Trust?*: Ross Godfrey's blues-revival guitar styles, Skye Edward's Afro-peacenik cooing, the veneration of '70s funk and dub, the sitar and string-section exotica. But like much of trip-hop's slim canon, that record was longer on mood than songs, which tended to fade from your consciousness as quickly as a conversation conducted under the influence of the group's namesake. On *Big Calm*, though, nearly every tune lingers in the memory, from the Delta-flavored sing-along "Part of the Process" to the Brit-reggae swagger of "Friction." Granted, the lyrics are still ephemeral variations on heartache and soul-ache themes. But I could listen to Skye's cool blue vowels for a long, long time.

Taking the opposite route, the Sneaker Pimps leave their "proper band" pretensions behind on *Becoming Remixed*, turning the Tricky-does-Blondie hybrid of their debut *Becoming X* into a DJ deconstruction site. The best remixes are the most radical, where Kelli Dayton's vocals are reduced to grist for the editing mill: a skittery house version of "Walking Zero" by speed garage mechanics Tuff Jam; a couple of shiny, obliterative Armand Van Helden dubs of "Spin Spin Sugar"; and Roni Size/Reprazent's rolling revamp of "Post Modern Sleaze," which only allows Dayton to get two words in edgewise: "sleaze" and "tease." Two words are really all she needs, though. *Becoming Remixed* suggests the singer may be better enjoyed as a disembodied, digitally processed disco diva than as a band frontwoman. In clubland, that's nothing to be ashamed of.

Will Hermes

Singles

By **Charles Aaron**

Hip-Hop Alert: If you spot any listings for performances by Ultramagnetic MC Keith "Kool Keith" Thornton, a.k.a. Dr. Octagon, etc., or any records by the above artist (like the recent 12-inch "Plastic World"/"Get Off My Elevator"), *bounce to it*! At this point, Thornton's a mockumentary in full pimp-stroll, bikini briefs and wrestling cape optional. As critic Tony Green observes, "It's like late Brando or some shit."

Aretha Franklin, **"A Rose Is Still a Rose"** (Arista)
Writer/producer/Fugee Lauryn Hill conjures the spirits of her childhood soul 45 collection (reanimating them with some snappy beat science), and Aretha proves she's no dusty memory, dispensing sweet maternal counsel and beauty-parlor straight-talk to a bitter kid stranded on love's freeway: "Now you're so tough, tryin' to wear tight clothes and th-a-a-ngs / Tossin' and flossin', tryin' to fill the void heartbreak brings." Raw, refined, and flawless.

FryerTuck, ***Hip Hop for Stoned Ravers*** EP (FryerPark)
While Coldcut sport funny, cyber-preneurial hats, this Vancouver duo ambushes the land of the loops. Boasting a cryptic jumble of foggy funk and sampled one-liners ("Ick, Ick, DJ Spooky's coming to town!"), they operate on the time-worn credo: "A mynah bird could come up with a hit platter."

Marcy Playground, **"Sex and Candy"** (Capitol); Cool for August, **"Walk Away"** (Warner Bros.)
Matchbox 21–22.

Modest Mouse, **"Grey Ice Water"/"Other People's Lives"** (Up)
Singer/guitarist Isaac Brock ain't gonna be no indie-rock footnote, so he passionately dreams up songs to escape his anxious skin—faded-postcard lyrics incanted over discordant guitar lines that rev and roar and sputter like a VW Beetle trying to pass an 18-wheeler. On these two non-album tracks, he haunts an empty mall parking lot in suburban Seattle, reliving lost loves and romanticizing Vietnam speed freaks, as the graduating class of 2000 parties at Wal-Mart across the bypass.

Mos Def featuring Q-Tip & Tash, **"Body Rock"** (Rawkus); Mos Def, **"The Universal Magnetic"/"If You Can Huh..."** (Rawkus); Mos Def, Mike Zoot, Shawn J. Period, **"High Drama"/Mike Zoot, "Service"** (GuessWhyld Productions)
While J-Live's matriculating instead of recording, the indie rapper du jour is Brooklyn's Danté "Mos Def" Beze, whose bemused battle-rhyming


Modern rot: Our Lady Peace.

catches you smilin' from the git-go: "Recognize all area crews / Whether you speak Japanese or goonie-goo-goo / So when I come through, other rappers boo-hoo / 'Cause they know they styles' soft like baby doo-doo" (from "The Universal Magnetic"). On "Body Rock," producer Shawn J. Period paints a glistening Old School/New School portrait, as Mos Def nudges Q-Tip to get witty and abstract like that *Beats, Rhymes and Life* fiasco never happened. "High Drama" is another keyboard-punchy Shawn J. production, with Mos Def stoop-chatting about death via ghetto fairy tale. On the flip, Mike Zoot forcefully toots his own horn, choosing to rock the Sony PlayStation over the wack radio station.

Our Lady Peace, **"Clumsy"** (Columbia)
Fourth Eye Blind.

DJ Spooky That Subliminal Kid, ***Synthetic Fury*** EP (Asphodel)
Sampling Eazy-E and dodging more playa-haters than Puffy at a Bloods barbecue, the DJ answer to Howard Cosell finally puts his galactic funk where his mouth is. With its warped symphonics and *War of the Worlds* breakbeats, "Dumb Mutha Fucka" kicks Tricky's ass (or at least tries), while on "Sum Ill Shit," Spooky butchers the bass line of "In-A-Gadda-Da-Vida" and then cuts up a claustrophobic dubplate. "Synthetic Fury" rewinds and rewires every drum'n' bass subgenre of the past three years, clearing the dance floor like a trickster exacting whimsical vengeance. PS.: No Stockhausen quotes or ambient pocket lint included. ●

Addresses: *Asphodel, PO Box 51, Chelsea Station, New York, NY 10113-0051; FryerPark, 1701 Powell Street, #502, Vancouver, BC Canada V5L 5C9; GuessWhyld Productions, 310 E. 75th St., No. 56, New York, NY 10021; Rawkus, 676 Broadway, 4th Floor, New York, NY 10012; Up, PO Box 21328, Seattle, WA 98111.*

Third Eye Blind/ Smash Mouth

Electric Factory, Philadelphia
February 28, 1998

Everyone screamed when thinks-he's-all-that Third Eye Blind singer Stephan Jenkins stripped off his jackat, but the consansus of tha Bishop Eustace Prep debutantas in attandanca was that the hottast babe in the band is actually blond guitarist Kevin Cadogan. To these girlfans, there was nothing "facalass" about thesa so-called one-hit wonders. I wish Joan Jett hed been thera to witnass tha teens holding hands during "Semi-Charmad Life," harmonizing loudly on tha lina "She comas round and sha goes down on ma."

If this sold-out double bill ware *Animal House*, preppy popstars Third Eya Blind would belong to Naidermeyer's frat and slobby ska-punks Smesh Mouth would belong to Bluto's. But both bends have e sad tandancy to toss off their respective crystel meth end buy-the-world-a-toke rafarancas like affected British guys trying too hard to sound unaffectadly Amarican. What's really halped tha fallow Califomians hang onto tha rap- and R&B-dominated Top 40 charts for so incredibly long is that both bands' lead singars spant unadvertised tima in hip-hop-orientad groups. Though thay're wisaly subtla, tha mile-a-minuta words-as-baats verses of songs like Third Eya's "Sami-Charmed Lifa" and Smash Mouth's "Walkin' on the Sun" era rhythmically down with tha dance-pop timas, even if they're technically guitar rock.

Of course, Third Eye Blind boogied more lika the Spin Doctors of my dreams than any rock-hop act—no draggy Deadhead or fake-funk jams, all boppy smart-ass hooks. Thair faster, Who-to-Clash power-chord numbers (including "Greduate," "Losing e Whole Year," end "London") are without exception thair catchiest, but aven their power balleds pick up staam. Still, the closest Jenkins came to rapping wes his rambling David Laa Roth–lika monologua about how "You walk up to some beautiful saxy body end say, 'I love you and want to have sex.'"

Though he never stooped to minstrel shtick, Smash Mouth mouth Steve Harwell slipped ganuine MC rhymes into the middle of his hit War ramaka, "Why Can't Wa Ba Friends?" and aven covared Housa of Pain's represantin'-Irish-Catholic antham "Jump Around." Tha bear-gutsy singar paced back end forth like a caged pachydarm, good-humored even while threatening to "come down and do a Jackie Chan on your ess." His musicians mostly perceive ska as a hopped-up sequal to hardcore's slempit polkas, but they're not immuna to Mafioso tarantellas or Latin counter-rhythms. They covered Chicano classics by ? & tha Mysterians and pumped up tha "Oya Como Va" organ in their breakthrough "Walkin' on tha Sun." Too eager to please their testostedrona contingancy by artificially speeding up tampos, Smash Mouth should waka up to the fact that thair least rushed (and most lovad) song is still planty speedy enough for "fast dencing." One of those prep-school girls did just that, walkin' the sun *Pulp Fiction*–style.

Chuck Eddy



MC lita: Stephan Jenkins of Third Eya Blind.



Dr Strangeloye: Kool Keith Thornton.

Kool Keith/ Ultramagnetic MCs

Tramps, New York City
February 26, 1998

Ultramagnetic MCs foundar "Kool" Keith Thornton was anormously pleased with his "supergalactic amphibian jackat," strutting around in what looked lika a standard outar garmant to the naked humanoid eye. He even threataned to rename *Elephant Man,* his upcoming solo album—which he alleged will be on Sony—in its lime-green honor. "You peopla would *never* buy this!" he shouted. "I'm uniqua!" And so he was: When I called Sony the next day, it was revealed that no contract axists.

But Kool Keith's ability to manipulate reality has served him quite well as of late. As the self-proclaimed "Dr. Octagon"—hip-hop's extratarrestriel answer to William S. Burroughs's Dr. Benwey—Kaith (along with formar partnar tha Automator) floated to tha top of the underground with the millennielist sci-fi sex fentasy *Dr. Octagonecologyst*. Alas, this sold-out Manhattan concart, really e showcase for tha recently regrouped old-schoolars Ultremagnatic MCs, suggasted that tha tida could turn. Hogging tha spotlight, yalling at his crew for minor mistakas, tha calabrated porn-collecting alien-homaboy came off like a mera control freak.

The Ultramagnetic MCs are legandary for thair history of pouring-water-on-each-other's-beepers infighting, and Kool Keith's recent solo success seems to have exacerbated the old tension. The group performed only four songs, including "Eese Back" and the era-defining "Ego Trippin'." Though they were slaakly confidant, Ultramagnatic MCs Tim Dog and Ced-G appeared alternately bored and aggravatad whenaver thair haadmastar pushed tham to the wings of tha stage. Ha quickly replaced them with a group of rah-rah protégés and his long-time DJ Kutmastar Kurt, whose sola responsibility was apparently to run the DAT tape. Kool Keith proudly bellowed that "I'm a DJ, too!" but only Kaith's analyst knows for sura why anyona would want to take credit for tha evening's leadan *Elephant Man* beats. On only a faw occasions, lika tha magnetically lewd ("Niggas suck my dick and their girlfriends drink my piss") title track of Kool Keith's *Sex Styles* solo album, did the music come alive.

But pimp life has been well-documanted; tha "supar ionic bionic" OB-GYN experianca has not. We paid good money to see the doctor, end we laft disappointed. Perhaps Kool Keith feels trapped by the expectations of that persona: He limited his highly enticipatad *Octagonecologyst* numbers to "3000" and tha plaintive "Blue Flowers," which his crew intarrupted by ordaring everyona to throw thair hands in tha air. Of course, evaryday Keith Thornton may be the strangest character of all. When he tried to bug everyona out with en Octagonel tala of UFO abduction, all ha could talk about was food. "Alians were rolling aluminum foil into a joint. You know what thay smoked?" he asked. "Appla Jacks!" Rafarences to Frankan Barry cereal, roast beef, and other snack foods followed. Waiting for the millannium? More lika waiting in lina at Arby's.

D. Strauss

KOOL KEITH: GEORGE DESOTA; JENKINS: GEORGE DESOTA.

heavy rotation

A recap of the past few months' most notable releases



Alpha
Come From Heaven
(Melankolic/Carolina)

What you're missing: Lalo Schifrin's *Mission: Impossible* soundtrack as torch song.
Conclusion: At their best, Portishead's fellow Bristolians understand that risking ridiculousness is the best way to keep supermodel boredom at bay. (Salamon)



Ani DiFranco
Little Plastic Castle
(Righteous Babe)

What you're missing: "Zygotes of songs" (her own term) with a guitar prowess she rarely gets credit for.
Conclusion: Girlfriend is on a mission to carve out a safe space for misfit sexual anarchists who edmit love hurts. (Hermes)



The Donnas
American Teenage Rock'n'Roll Machine
(Lookout!)

What you're missing: The Donnas squeeze ten pep-rally pom-pom stomps into 24 shiny minutes of party-metal hair spray.
Conclusion: These desperate teenage lovedolls insist that girls needn't give it up to live it up. (Eddy)



Killah Priest
Heavy Mental
(Geffen)

What you're missing: Inspirational lyric: "Between the eye sockets is where I build my rockets / I broke the U.S. bar code / Only to glow with a holy robe." Then someone begs him to turn off the tape. Jiggy!
Conclusion: Priest is a true-blue Wu, building beats that are as much digital noise as rhythm. (Frere-Jonas)



Modest Mouse
The Lonesome Crowded West
(Up)

What you're missing: A young postpunk trio absorbed by a peculiarly American kind of lonelinass—a strip-mall ennui fualed by watery Slushies and sugar highs.
Conclusion: The music creates e fleeting illusion that's almost as good as actually getting someplace. (Cox)



Pearl Jam
Yield
(Epic)

What you're missing: Part touchstone, part pariah, Pearl Jam have tried arty gestures; they've ostentatiously declined to rock; now they've come back with an album full of gracefully ambivalent anthems.
Conclusion: The revelation of *Yield* is Vedder's effort to communicate again. (Smith)



2Pac
R U Still Down? (Remember Me)
(Amaru/Jive)

What you're missing: This second collection of pre-prison material (1991–94) is prophecy from a voice that buried itself in griaf well before the body's demise.
Conclusion: As always, there's ample self-destructive bullshit, but as a whole the album's eerie and undenieble. (Berrett)



Various Artists
V Classic
(Ultra/Konkrete Jungle)

Whet you're missing: The V Recordings crew—Roni Size, DJ Krust, DJ Die, Bryan Gee, and Jumping Jack Frost—treat drum'n'bass as shettered jazz, a funk of imperfection.
Conclusion: As haunted es deep blues and as herd es Gang of Four. (Blashill)



Victoria Williams
Musings of a Creekdipper
(Atlantic)

What you're missing: With her exquisitely elfin voice, Williams posts dispatches from some feirylend where God is always on your side and the wind is your friend.
Conclusion: There's sappy, and then there's freaky-sappy, and Williems is the latter. (Vowell)



Robert Wyatt
Shleep
(Thirsty Ear)

What you're missing: Graceful mistakas, grown-up melodies, and rhythms that care more about the earth turning than your ass shaking.
Conclusion: Electronicats who don't know what people are capable of in real tima will be shemed by the beauty therein. (Frere-Jones)



where to buy

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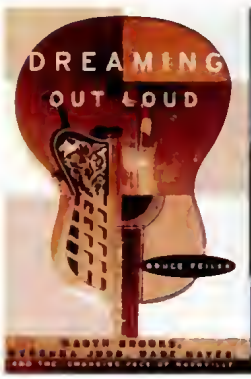
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Much Too Young to Feel This Damn Old

A decade on, the New Country revolution needs some serious rejuvenation. Is there a cure for Nashville? By **Eric Weisbard**





"New Country" isn't so new anymore. When Garth Brooks, Clint Black, and Alan Jackson all debuted in 1989, they marked two changes in Twangland: the emergence of stars unafraid to acknowledge the present, particularly rock and feminism; and a full-on embrace of pop studio effects. Listening to country radio in the early '90s, as much of America did, you heard the confident glow of new artists, sparkling sounds. Then Nashville set in: too many samey arrivistes, the music left to calcify. As Bruce Feiler's new book *Dreaming Out Loud: Garth Brooks, Wynonna Judd, Wade Hayes and the Changing Face of Nashville* (Avon) ably chronicles, New Country is now a house in sore need of renovation.

Garth Brooks, the best-selling '90s musician in *any* genre, has always exemplified New Country's unprecedented commercial and artistic ambitions. But of late those ambitions have seemed twisted, as when he held up release of his recent album *Sevens* until Capitol agreed to ship five million copies and spend umpteen dollars on promotion, effectively purchasing chart position for a record that's Brooks's weakest yet. When the CD quickly slid down the charts, Brooks bumped it back up to No. 4 by announcing that he'd donate a week's profits to charity. *Sevens* has trademark Brooks diversity: the subtle relationship memoir "She's Gonna Make It"; the transposed pop-metal crunch of "Do What You Gotta Do"; an inspirational number set in the trenches of World War I; and "Longneck Bottle," which proves he can Western swing too. But these are familiar feats now, and rarely give me the goosebumps his earlier work did.

Stars rise and fall, yet Nashville's troubles are more systemic. Country radio is as tightly formatted and focus-grouped as modern rock, only it's far bigger, with some 2,600 stations. Feiler documents the decline of **Wade Hayes**, a talented young baritone pushed to promote his fluffiest material by well-intentioned handlers. The first single off Hayes's new one, *When the Wrong One Loves You Right*, has a classic New Country theme—she's pregnant, but by somebody else, and runs off alone; he'd have loved her anyway. On the whole, though, he again succumbs to formulaic conservatism. Elsewhere, **Matraca Berg** is struggling to get "Back in the Saddle"—her cackling tale of yuppie ladies lusting for dumb studs—past the programmers.

Ideally, a few performers with strong personalities would demand more leeway. But larger-than-life characters have been pushed out of the industry: Rosanne Cash, Dwight Yoakam, Lyle Lovett, Steve Earle, k.d. lang. Feiler shows **Wynonna Judd**, New Country's bluesiest, most dynamic vocalist, reduced by tabloid gossip and better-selling female rivals to helpless insecurity. A glorious self-satire called "The Wyld Unknown" aside, her latest, *The Other Side*, lacks coherent direction, not to mention grade-A material—in songs, as in sitcoms, the best writers go where the money is. She'd have been better off fleeing Nashville for the adult rock world.

Modern rock stations can switch between grunge, electronica, and ska. New Country has one sound; indeed, the number of studio musicians who produce it is so small, there's nearly one *band*. Flipping through recent albums (Hayes, Shania Twain, Lila McCann, Sammy Kershaw, Rhett Akins, George Strait, Brooks and Dunn, Mindy McCready, Martina McBride), I realized they all had the same electric guitarist: congratulations, Brent Mason. I'm captivated by the basic New Country sound: Its normal-for-pop DAT multitrackings have the surreal effect of pitting rootsiness against an inherently rootless technology. In Feiler's book there's a glorious moment when Hayes's producer demands a "U2-does-country" beat. But any exciting new sound gets creaky eventually: Stax soul, Nirvana choruses. And Nashville doesn't have a substitute.

Not surprisingly, the two biggest acts to come out of country in recent years, **Shania Twain** and **LeAnn Rimes**, have attenuated links to official Nashville. The oft-unstomachable Rimes's first big hit, "Blue," was a Patsy Cline throwback produced in New Mexico. Her second, "How Do I Live," is pure adult contemporary, written by schlockmeister Diane Warren. As for Twain, she may employ Music Row pros, but her Svengali, husband/producer Mutt Lange, cut his teeth making Def Leppard and Bryan Adams records. Though the boogie-rich, technoid *Come On Over* out-funs any country album in years, to call it a "radical progression" insults Brooks and Dunn, one of many New Country acts to feature remixable dance rhythms. Lange relies on '80s retro (an update on New Country's usual '70s retro) while Twain synthesizes a host of assertive female predecessors into one perky package.

Feiler ends his book pleading with Nashville: "Stop underestimating the intelligence of your audience." But they've *always* done that, even in New Country's glory years. "Achy Breaky Heart," "Indian Outlaw," "I Feel Lucky," "Boot Scootin' Boogie": these were pop hits, as audaciously transparent as "MMMBop" or "Walking on the Sun." What really stung country was that VH1 awoke and took all those rap-and-grunge-hating music fans back with better pop. I predict that the next generation of country stars will shuck the cowboy hats (always an artifice, since "country" is an abstraction) and blend more easily with MTV/VH1 acts. Short term, unfortunately, that probably means more sirens like Celine Dion aspirant **Martina McBride**, whose hit album *Evolution* features both the Adult Contemporary hit "Valentine" and the country barn-burner "A Broken Wing."

Even with its market share slipping, country commands a massive chunk of the pop demographic, and its fans are the most faithful around. Reason is, the formula may be tight musically, but emotionally it's laid-back in a soul-sustaining way that rockers disdain. Alt-countrarians too often find some anguished, semi-profound fever pitch and remain there. I'll take **George Strait**, who predates Garth by a movement (Strait was a "neotraditionalist"), still cranking 2 million–sellers with hits like "Round About Way," an easy-rolling chuckle from the king of the nonchalant come-on. Or **Rhett Akins** on "Happy as We Wanna Be," knowing just what to ask for: "With a little bit of love and some cable TV / We can be happy / Relatively happy / Cool as a glass of ice tea." ●

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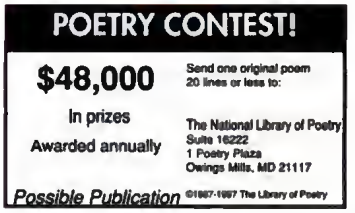




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GENIUS LESSONS BY SEAN LANDERS

#24 "JEWEL" THANKS TO ALL OF YOU SPIN READERS WHO SENT IN YOUR BALLOTS TO VOTE ME EITHER IN OR OUT FOR THE UPCOMING TWELVE MONTHS. YOU OVERWHELMINGLY VOTED ME OUT. UNFORTUNATELY FOR YOU THOUGH, THE RESPONSE TO THE COLUMN WAS THE MOST MAIL SPIN EVER GOT SO BY SHEER VOLUME ALONE I'M PROUD TO SAY THAT SPIN HAS DECIDED TO RE-SIGN ME FOR ANOTHER YEAR. BETTER LUCK NEXTTIME SUCKERS, SO NOW THAT I'LL BE AROUND UNTIL MAY OF 1999, I THINK I SHOULD STOP WHINING ABOUT MY JOB HERE AND START ENTERTAINING YOU. I WOULD LIKE TO WRITE ABOUT JEWEL, BUT ALL I REALLY HAVE TO SAY ABOUT HER IS THAT I'M TERRIFICALLY FRUSTRATED THAT I CAN'T FIND NAKED PICTURES OF HER ON THE INTERNET. GERRI SPICE IS A DIFFERENT STORY. IT'S DIFFICULT TO NOT FIND PICTURES OF HER NAKED ON THE INTERNET AND SHE DELIVERS THE GOODS WITH A SPECTACULAR PAIR OF BREASTS. WELL DONE GERRI SPICE. AMERICA'S NEW FEMALE ROCK SUPERSTARS ARE WAY TOO PRUDISH ABOUT GETTING NAKED IN FRONT OF THE CAMERA. IT'S NOT LIKE THEY WILL LOSE INTEGRITY BY GETTING NAKED, NOT IN MY OPINION ANYWAY. HOW CAN I MAKE THIS PERFECTLY CLEAR TO YOU WOMEN OF ROCK, YOU BECOME POP GODDESSES WHEN YOU SHOW YOURSELVES NAKED. BOTH MADONNA AND COURTNEY LOVE HAVE DONE IT AND THEY ARE HOUSEHOLD NAMES ACROSS THIS GREAT LAND - IF NOT FOR YOU THEN DO IT FOR US BELEAGUERED LOSERS OUT HERE, WE HAVE VERY LITTLE ELSE TO LIVE FOR I ASSURE YOU. THE ANONYMOUS WOMEN OF PORN MAGAZINES JUST DON'T CUT IT. HOWEVER, TO SEE ALANIS, FIONA OR THE COUGTED JEWEL NAKED WOULD BE LIKE SEEING THE GIRL NEXT DOOR NAKED. YOU CAN'T JUST ACCUSE ME OF BEING A PIG BECAUSE ALL FEMALE ROCK STARS HAVE MADE VIDEOS OR POSED FOR PROMOTIONAL PHOTOS IN WHICH THEY ARE PORTRAYED IN THE MOST SEXUAL MANNER. DON'T TELL ME IT WAS INNOCENT, YOU KNEW WHAT YOU WERE DOING. SO NOW THAT YOU HAVE OUR ATTENTION, I THINK I CAN SPEAK FOR THE NON-SOFT MALES OF AMERICA AND SAY, LETS SEE IT. COME ON, SEX SELLS AND WE'RE BUYING. ALL I'M ASKING IS TO SELL US WHAT WE "REALLY REALLY WANT" THE SPICE GIRLS DO AND THAT'S WHY WE TOLERATE THEIR HORRIBLE MUSIC. WE ARE TOLERATING YOUR HORRIBLE MUSIC WITH THE HOPE THAT ONE DAY YOU'LL DELIVER THE DAMN GOODS. DO YOU ACTUALLY THINK SAVE YOUR SOUL WOULD HAVE BEEN SUCH A HUGE HIT IF JEWEL DIDN'T LOOK LIKE JEWEL? HELL NO! I WATCH JEWEL'S SNAGGLE-TOOTH SMILE, HER SWEET EYES AND AMPLE BUSOM. I STARE AT HER PAST MY ENGORGED TRUNCHEON IN ~~THE~~ BED DURING THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT ON MTV AND THINK TO MYSELF: MAN-O-LIVE, I'D LIKE TO, OH BABY IF I COULD JUST GET MY, OH JESUS! JESUS H. CHRIST!!! SADLY, THE ONLY WAY I'LL EVER HAVE HER IS IF I WRITE TO HER IN SPIN SO HERE I AM DOING IT. WHY I PORTRAY MYSELF AS A PIG OBSESSED WITH JEWEL IS A MYSTERY EVEN TO ME BECAUSE I AM NOT IN THE LEAST. I WANT TO BE SAVED AMERICA, JEWEL, ANYBODY HELP ME. SOMEBODY SAVE MY SOUL. HMMM SAVE YOUR SOUL MMMM.... THAT JEWEL IS HOT! MAN I'D LIKE TO.....



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